



COLONEL  
ANNESLEY'S  
DAUGHTERS









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*A NOVEL.*

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.

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## COLONEL ANNESLEY'S DAUGHTERS.



### CHAPTER I.

**H**E tide was coming in but slowly, large masses of rock lay still uncovered, though the foam dashed over them as every wave approached ; black rocks covered with slimy seaweed stretched out for a considerable distance, and then came a long line of beach, upon which some boats were drawn up ; large boulders strewed the beach, having evidently been hurled from the cliffs above. It was one of those afternoons when bright gleams of sunshine

if struggling with his anger and excitement. The dog rose and followed him, licking his hand and casting wistful and reproachful glances at the girl, as if he guessed his master was being wronged.

“What are you crying for?” he asked, stopping suddenly; “I am not going to hurt you. I have loved you, that is enough, you will ever be sacred in my eyes; but you have broken my life,” he continued, with a sob in his voice; ‘you have to-day done a deed you will have to answer for. I would curse you, only I cannot; but when you are married, and have got the position your sordid soul covets, and which will to you take the place of the love you have thrown away, the day will come when your sin will find you out; may you be dealt with then as you have dealt with me! It is a punishment,

you may be sure, that will fall on your head whether I wish it or no ; but if you asked me now on your knees to marry you, to forgive you, to take you back to my heart, I would refuse. You are no longer my idol, you have broken my dream, you have robbed me of all that filled my life with love and joy."

Turning on his heel, without another word he strode rapidly away down the beach.

"Guy!" called the girl, "Guy!" but he heard not, or he did not heed, and after watching his retreating figure till it was hidden from her sight, she flung herself on the stones and sobbed bitterly.

"Oh ! how I love him ! darling, darling Guy, come back to me," she moaned, but the wind caught up the words and seemed to hurl them back at her. For a long time

she lay there, sobbing like a passionate child, calling her lover by every name of affection and endearment. The rain had begun to fall, slowly but steadily, but it was some time before she became aware of it; at last she arose, thoroughly chilled and stiff with lying on the hard stones, and picking up her hat, she walked slowly home.





## CHAPTER II.

IN the small drawing-room of a lodging-house facing the sea, and furnished as such rooms generally are, with a good deal of ornamental furniture, and very little of either a useful or comfortable description, sundry cheap ornaments, elaborate antimacassars disporting themselves on every chair and sofa, ready to catch and cling to everything that comes in contact with them rather than adhere to their proper places, on a sofa near the window, a delicate-looking woman of about forty was lying.

She had the remains of some considerable personal attractions, but ill health and discontent had left their traces on the pinched features, the eyes had a faded look, and the untidy hair which escaped from a cap which had lost its freshness was dull and rather colourless. She was endeavouring, in spite of the fading light, to finish the last pages of a book, evidently a novel from the cover. Two small children, a boy of five years old and a girl rather older, were playing in the room and disturbing her by constantly appealing to her to settle some dispute. Her patience gradually became exhausted at the repeated demands on her attention, and she turned with a gesture of impatience towards the window, where a slight, dark-haired girl of eighteen was standing watching the falling rain,

and straining her eyes, as if to catch sight of someone she was expecting.

"I wish you would keep the children quiet, Bee," she burst forth, in a querulous voice, "instead of standing staring at that horrid sea; it is enough to send one mad only to hear it washing against the beach. They are both so tiresome, that really I feel as if my head was ready to burst with the noise they are making. Be quiet, Johnnie; let Flossie alone, will you?" she continued.

"She is a nasty, selfish thing, mamma, she will not let me touch her doll, but I will, though!" 'Here a grab was made by him at the object of his envy, which he seized by the hair; the same rough treatment having already been inflicted on previous occasions, the result was that the doll's wig remained in his

clutch, while she herself fell with a bang on to the floor. An angry roar rose from the incensed owner, who darting forward like a little fury endeavoured to punish the offender by scratching out both his eyes, in which attempt she might have been successful had not the young girl rushed forward and separated the combatants.

“They are dreadful,” moaned the mother; “they will be the death of me. I never knew such naughty children.”

Words of hearty assent rose to Bee’s lips, but were checked suddenly,—

“Let me alone,” cried Flossie; “take your hand off my shoulder. I hate you,” she continued, striving to bite the hand that held her.

“Stop that noise directly!” cried her irritated parent; “do you hear me, Flossie? I will whip you if you don’t.”

"No you won't, you always say so, but you never do, so I don't believe you," replied the child pertly.

"What have I done to deserve to have such ill-behaved children?" said Mrs Annesley feebly; "you must keep them quiet, Bee; really, with my nerves, it is more than I can stand. People who are strong and well have no idea of the suffering that delicate nerves entail."

The door opened, and the girl who had been sitting and talking on the beach, entered,—cold, pale and tired.

"There is Conty," cried the boy. "Flossie is so naughty, she has scratched me; mamma says she will whip her—I hope she will."

The new comer pushed him away from her, with a look of unutterable disgust.

"I am going up to my room, Bee, you

will find me there. I must change my things as they are damp."

"Do not go away, Bee, and leave me with the children," protested Mrs Annesley.

"They had better come to Joyce, then," replied the girl wearily.

"She is busy packing, so they must stay here till half-past five, when their tea will be ready."

Poor Beatrice sat down without another word, an expression of despondency settling down on her young face sadly out of keeping with it.

Beatrice Annesley was a very pretty girl, if not strictly beautiful ; her hair and eyes were dark ; her forehead broad and low ; the mouth not very small ; but the lips well cut, and very sensitive, showing every emotion. She was about the middle height, strongly but slightly formed, her

complexion reminding one a good deal of an October peach. How she longed to go and join the sister whose sad, weary face had made her heart ache; how she longed to hear the result of the conversation between her sister and her lover! But she never thought of making any objection to obeying her stepmother's request, and taking up a book of pictures, she called Johnnie to her side.

Half-past five struck, and soon after the nurse made her appearance and to her great relief took away the two children, and Beatrice, being free, hurried up to the room she shared with her sister. Constance Annesley was sitting on the floor with her back to the fire, trying to dry her hair, which fell in golden waves over her shoulders.

“I have lit the fire,” she said, in a

hopeless, despairing voice, “I am so cold and miserable.”

Beatrice knelt down by her sister and, putting her arms round her lovingly, said,—

“Conty, darling, you look wretched; tell me you have not parted with Guy for ever! Oh! no, not really?” she continued, as her sister for all answer began to sob softly, as if almost exhausted.

“Yes; it is all over,” she gasped; “he says I have cursed his life, that he will never forgive me, and that if I asked him on my knees now to marry me, he would refuse; he said that; those were his very words, Bee.”

“Oh, but he will forgive you, if you only tell him you are sorry for ever thinking it was possible to give him up, if you only tell him you are wretched.”

“No, he will not; he was very angry.

Oh, Bee! he spoke cruelly and hardly ; he told me I had never loved him, and that I was false and heartless."

" Well, Conty, you can hardly blame him,—for think how much he must himself have suffered ; remember how he has loved you all these years."

" But he refuses to believe I have ever loved him, or that I do still love him."

" Naturally he does ; for he may well say, if you loved him you would not give him up. Why are you so afraid of being poor, Conty ? I do not myself think it is pleasant, but I do not feel as if I should dread it, if I really loved a man."

" There is no use arguing the matter all over again," said Constance, springing up. " I have told you often what I feel. Do you think the sight of all that goes on in our house daily is not enough to frighten

me? Do you think I don't dread seeing papa's black looks, and hearing Mrs Annesley's whining complaints? My soul sickens when I think of all the shifts we go through to keep up appearances, the worries of being obliged continually to tell the tradespeople they must wait for their money. Do you think I can help being ashamed every day of my life? And can you wonder, then, that I should dread marrying a man whose income will be a still smaller one than papa's?"

"Some people are poorer on a large income than others on a smaller one; it depends on how you choose to live," observed Beatrice gravely. "Papa is extravagant, and Mrs Annesley a bad manager."

"Say, rather, that she neglects everything,—she is such a fool."

"All the same, Conty, I do not believe

all people need be as uncomfortable as we are, because they are not rich. It is hardly right, perhaps, to find fault with one's father, but I cannot help feeling that Mrs Annesley has some right to object to his spending as much money as he does in betting and playing cards ; and it is hard on her that he should have lost so much of her money in speculations."

" For goodness' sake, Bee, don't let us have all that over again ; it has been dinned into my ears a hundred times by Mrs Annesley herself. I wish she had never married papa ; we were poor before, but not nearly as badly off as we are now. If it had not been her doing, we should have gone on living at Redsands, and then papa would not have got back into his old ways by coming to London."

" That is true, Conty ; and had we gone

on living at Redsands instead of coming to London, you would never have thrown over Guy, and would never have known Lord Denzil."

" You are wrong ; that has nothing to say to it. Guy has no money ; and I will not marry a poor man. Poverty is misery ! "

Conty, do not be angry with me, but I cannot help feeling that you ought to have thought of this before. You have been engaged to marry Guy for two whole years, and he is not poorer now than he was at first."

" I was a child then, I have seen much more of the world now, and I know myself better ; it is not in me to love any man sufficiently well to induce me to bind myself to such a life as mine would be if I married Guy."

“If you had not met Lord Denzil, Conty, I do not believe, however, that you would have given Guy up.”

“Leave his name out of the question, if you please ; Lord Denzil is not the only man who is likely to come in my way, and who may wish to marry me,” replied Constance haughtily.

“Yes ; but still I believe it is his devotion to you that has opened your eyes, all the same,” persisted Bee.

“I think you are very unfeeling, you need not make me more wretched than I am already. Do you think it cost me nothing to give Guy up ?” and Conty’s tears began to flow again.

“I am sure I do not wish to be unkind,” replied the younger sister earnestly, “only we feel so differently about it all ; if I once loved a man,

I would never give him up, I would rather—”

“ Make both yourself and him miserable,” broke in Conty impatiently.

“ That depends on what we should consider wretchedness ; to my mind, being always with the person you loved best on earth, ministering to their happiness, doing all you can for them, would alone ensure my being happy.”

“ There is no use in saying anything more ; it is all over. Guy and I have parted for ever, and I firmly believe he meant what he said, that nothing would induce him to take me back to his heart. Guy's is a hard nature, Bee ; I have often thought so. He would always want to govern. I should have to see with his eyes, and hear with his ears.”

“ I will not listen to one word against

him," cried Beatrice warmly; "we have known Guy all our lives, he has always been the same—kind, honest and true; when I think of him, the words '*sans peur et sans reproche*,' always come into my mind."

"Well, there is no time to talk any more about it, for it is nearly seven o'clock, and I must do my hair and get ready for tea."





### C H A P T E R III.

**C**ONSTANCE and Beatrice Annesley were the daughters of Colonel Annesley, who was formerly in the Grenadier Guards, by his first wife. She had died when Beatrice was six years old. A few years before this story begins he had married a widow—a Mrs Fairfax—a rather handsome blonde woman, whose husband had been in a cavalry regiment. Mrs Fairfax had lived for several years in India, and the habits she had contracted there had added a great deal to

the natural indolence of her disposition. She had an income of fifteen hundred pounds a-year, which had been no small inducement to Colonel Annesley in making her his wife. He had always been restricted with regard to money, though he had expectations from a rich and eccentric uncle, who, however, was not more than ten years his senior. His first marriage had been a love match ; and in his selfish way Colonel Annesley had idolised his wife. His second marriage had been distasteful to his children, and particularly so to his son and his eldest daughter, Beatrice being only eleven years of age at the time.

The second Mrs Annesley had done nothing to neutralise the distrust with which her step-children had from the first regarded her. They were too old to pet

and spoil ; and she did not care for the society of young people. A year after her marriage, her daughter Flossie was born, and the following year Johnnie made his appearance. She had no children by her first marriage, and what affection she was capable of feeling, except for herself, was bestowed on those two children.

When she had first married Colonel Annesley, he was living in a rambling, picturesque old house in Yorkshire ; but the country was not to her taste, and she left her husband no peace till he consented to leave the home both he and his children were so much attached to, and remove to London. Mrs Annesley had many arguments with which to prove the wisdom of this ; but nothing perhaps more really influenced her husband in acceding to her

wishes than the knowledge that he had, by ignorance and imprudence, contrived to lose the larger half of her fortune in speculations, and he hardly felt justified at that time in refusing any request of hers.

Mrs Annesley, her children and two step-daughters, had been staying during the last six weeks at the picturesque little watering-place of L—, on the south coast. Colonel Annesley had joined them for a few days, but the dulness, and above all the discomfort of being cooped up in a small house, with a querulous wife and fractious children and ill-cooked dinners, had soon driven him away.

It was the last evening of their stay at L—. Captain Goring, who had been engaged to be married for the last two years to Constance Annesley, had come down for a few days. He was, as Beatrice

had said, a friend of their childhood, having lived with his widowed mother in a small house a couple of miles from their old home in Yorkshire. The engagement had been entered into with Colonel Annesley's knowledge, but scarcely with his entire approval, for he had considered that his daughter's beauty entitled her to make a better marriage.

Since they had been living in London, he had taken Constance out a good deal into society, and he had noticed with some pride the sensation her beauty had created. Among those who were constant visitors at the small house in Cadogan Place, in which the Annesleys lived, was Lord Denzil, a man of twenty-six. He was, in every sense of the word, a thorough gentleman, though not possessed of very great personal attractions in the eyes of Con-

stance Annesley, whose ideas of what was most to be admired in a man had been formed after the model of Guy Goring.

Hubert Denzil was not very tall, and being slightly built, scarcely looked his real height. His complexion was fair, and the colouring delicate, which gave him rather a boyish appearance. His father had died when he was a child, and had been succeeded by his eldest son, Hubert being the second.

He had been his mother's idol. His health had prevented his being sent to a public school; and an accident which had happened to him when he was still a boy, leaving a slight limp behind it, had prevented his joining in the active amusements most popular among boys. Later he had gone to Oxford, where he had taken his degree creditably, if not bril-

liantly. About two years ago a fall from his horse had caused the death of Hubert Denzil's eldest brother, and at twenty-six he found himself almost alone in the world, the mother to whom he was devotedly attached having died a few months before her eldest son. He had inherited a large unencumbered property in one of the prettiest counties in England.

Colonel Annesley had been a brother officer of Hubert's father, and he had gladly welcomed the son of his old friend; nor was he displeased at the evident admiration young Denzil evinced for his daughter—an admiration Constance received rather loftily, rather as if she considered it her due; and one which was maddening to Guy Goring, who contrived to hover round her as often as he could. Many had been the bitter quarrels caused

by his jealousy of Lord Denzil, but up to the present time Constance had always contrived to soothe his wounded feelings, and re-establish his trust in her.

The two sisters were as unlike in character as in appearance. Constance had always been spoilt and petted. She had known she was beautiful from her earliest childhood, she was possessed of little depth of feeling, a good deal of selfishness, an easy temper, and always knew how to do the becoming. She was a model child—always tidy, and never tore her frocks, in which she presented a striking contrast to her younger sister, whose tastes and habits led her constantly into dire disgrace with the old nurse. Many a time had Beatrice laid her small head, the thick locks of which had got entangled with twigs and leaves, on Joyce's knees,

and said, “Oh, dear Joy, don’t scold too much! But I can’t help it; I am so unlucky, my hair will catch to everything, and all the thorns and nails look out for my frocks to tear them, and, somehow, when I tumble down, I always pull out the tucks, and why my stockings always cut into holes at the knees I can’t think, unless it is because I am always falling on them;” and then the little arms would entwine themselves lovingly round the old nurse’s neck, and the soft lips press a kiss on the withered cheek; and Joyce would feel that, though Miss Constance was a child to be proud of, Miss Bee was, after all, her heart’s darling.

Unlike as they were, the sisters had, however, been much attached to each other; —indeed, all the love Conty seemed capable of bestowing on anybody but herself was

given to her younger sister ; while Beatrice had the most intense admiration for Conty's beauty, and would wait on her like a slave.

From her earliest childhood the second sister had always been at the beck and call of every member of the family—always in motion, ever ready to wait on others, never thinking of herself. Busy Bee, as her brother had named her, or Little Sunbeam, as her father would fondly call her, was a general favourite.

The first break in the peace and happiness of the family came in the person of the second Mrs Annesley. The two girls were frequently banished to the school-room. Constance made no secret of her dislike to the new-comer ; and even Beatrice, after having received several snubbings when she attempted anything like

a show of affection towards her step-mother, never made any further pretence of affection for her.

The brother, who was the eldest of the family, vented his disgust at his father's second marriage so openly as to draw on himself a good many expressions of anger from his father. The two children had not added to the general harmony, as they were alternately spoilt or severely punished by their ill-judging mother.

Beatrice had been sent to school during the last two years, and only returned home about six months previously. The evening on which this story opens was the last of their stay at L—, and the following day the family returned to London,—Colonel Annesley having declared, in spite of his wife's objection to London in November, that he could not afford a longer

residence at the seaside, and reminded her that, having herself selected London as their home, she must be contented to live there the greater part of the year.





## CHAPTER IV.

**D**HREE months later Constance Annesley was engaged to be married to Lord Denzil. Her father was delighted. Mrs Annesley praised her good sense. Beatrice said almost nothing. These three months had been very trying to her. Constance had avoided speaking of her own feelings; and, after a few ineffectual attempts to induce her sister to reconsider her determination in throwing Guy Goring over, and to think seriously before linking her fate with a man for whom she had no sort of love,

she had desisted from saying more ; but a barrier had arisen between the sisters, for the first time in their young lives, and Beatrice felt it bitterly.

The end of April had been fixed for the wedding, and the preparations for the trousseau had given them all plenty of occupation. Colonel Annesley had expressed a wish that it should be provided on a liberal scale, though how it was to be paid for was a consideration he put away from him, as he generally did any matters which were not agreeable to contemplate.

To all outward appearance Constance had forgotten Guy, and his name never passed her lips ; but she was not destined to escape having her wrong-doing towards him once more brought before her.

One morning, about a fortnight before

her marriage, she was returning home on foot with her sister through Hyde Park. It was a warm, sunny morning, and the spring was beginning to make an early appearance, the trees were all budding, and here and there might be seen a sprinkling of tender green leaves. The beds of tulips and hyacinths which bordered the sides of the road through the Park were already looking gay. As they were drawing near to Hyde Park Corner, they passed a lady dressed in black sitting on a bench. She rose suddenly, and advancing towards the two girls, stopped them abruptly. A scarlet flush spread over Constance's face as she recognised Mrs Goring.

“ You hardly expected to see me in London,” said the latter; “ but I have come up to see my boy, to try and rescue him from the consequences that your con-

duct towards him has brought on his head."

"I assure you," began Constance hurriedly—

"I want no assurances from you, Constance Annesley. I daresay you have plenty to say for yourself, plenty of excuses to make for your conduct; but do not waste your time in repeating them to me. Remember, I am his mother, and nothing you could urge on me would make your conduct less shameful in my eyes. Let me only remind you of one thing: evil-doing, sooner or later, brings its own punishment. You have thrown away the love of a good, honest, true-hearted man, a better love than has fallen to many women's lots; you have chosen your path in life as seemed to you good. I cannot say, may you be happy, because I am not

a humbug, and I have no wish for your happiness. I have no kindly feeling towards you; but nothing I can desire for you will equal what you will suffer sooner or later. But no," she continued, as a look of scorn passed over her delicate features, "you will perhaps escape real suffering; for you have too little heart or conscience to learn what remorse is, you will never realise the pain you have caused another to suffer: too little honesty to blush to accept the love of a man to whom you give no love in exchange. My pity is for him, not for you. But be assured of one thing: when you have gained all you hope for in this marriage, you will not be happy. In some shape or another suffering will come to you; and then, in your own suffering, you will remember how you have caused others to suffer. You think my

words hard, unwomanly, perhaps ; but can you be surprised ? You have broken my heart ! ” she cried, passionately. “ My boy was my all. He was honourable, open as the day. I do not believe he ever concealed a thought or a feeling from his mother ; and now he would die of shame to tell her of the change your influence has worked in him,—of the life he has led during the last few months. I tell you his whole nature is changed ; he has become reckless, and God knows how he has wrung my heart ; and now he is going away from me altogether. In a week he sails for India. All I pray is, that the day may come when he will thank God he has been spared from taking a girl as heartless as you to be his wife.”

Constance had remained dumb, and all colour had faded from her cheek, as Mrs

Goring poured out her words vehemently. Once or twice she had tried to speak, but the words had died on her lips. Beatrice looked on in silent wonder. Could this excited woman before them be gentle Mrs Goring, who had hitherto always been in her eyes the embodiment of all that was most tender and considerate to others. A feeling of sorrow, mingled with pain, weighed on the girl's heart.

“I am sorry more than I can tell you,” stammered Constance, at last.

“Sorry!” exclaimed Mrs Goring, in a bitter voice. “Yes, I can understand pretty well what your puerile, feeble mind understands by the word; you are sorry to have missed a pleasure on which your heart was set, sorry to have lost your pet dog, and sorry to have destroyed the happiness of a man's life, to have killed his faith in

women, and broken his mother's heart ; sorry indeed ! ”

“ I have told you the truth,” replied Constance hotly.

“ Pray spare yourself any more words ; you can never undo what you have done. May God forgive you, for it is more than I can do,” and she turned away quickly.

The two girls walked on rapidly, and in utter silence, till Constance said,—“ Let us get into a cab, I cannot walk any further ;” but when they had done so, she seemed unable to speak. Beatrice felt no desire to break the silence. Though she felt for her sister, her fullest sympathy was given to Mrs Goring. “ How that woman must have suffered ! ” she kept repeating to herself, and the news that Guy was leaving England was a shock to her. How she longed to bid him good-bye, and speak one word

of sympathy to her old playfellow. When they reached home, Constance said, abruptly, —“Do not speak of this again.”

What her sister might be feeling, Beatrice knew not; she saw that Conty was very pale, and had an excited and suffering look in her eyes; whether she had been really touched by what had passed that morning, or only her anger had been aroused, Beatrice knew not, but she heartily acquiesced in her sister's wish that the subject should be dropped, for she remembered well how futile all her efforts to induce Conty to spare Guy had been, and a doubt which had often lately crossed her mind again presented itself to her:—was not it perhaps eventually better for Guy that this marriage, in which he had placed all his hopes of happiness, should be broken off? could the only love Constance seemed

capable of bestowing on any man, have ever satisfied such a nature as his? Was this lovely sister of hers only like a marble statue, and as cold and soulless? But how her heart ached for the mother and the son!

The last days before the wedding passed rapidly; there was so much to be done, so much in which Mrs Annesley required help and advice, so many of her complaints to be listened to. Beatrice strove to be patient, but her very heart was sore and weary.

Constance was calm, and spent a good deal of her time naturally with Hubert Denzil, who was never weary of gazing at her, and bringing her daily some fresh tribute of his love and devotion. She was gentle and courteous to him, but cold and very reserved, and Beatrice wondered exceedingly at his apparent blindness to his future wife's feelings towards him, and that he

could be contented with so very small a return for the passionate love he lavished on her. A great pity for him filled her heart, for she had grown to like him very much, and to appreciate his many good qualities. Constance spoke but little of herself, and a certain reserve marked their intercourse when she was alone with her sister ; this was a sore trial to poor Beatrice, with her warm, loving nature, and when the last night came, she had cried herself to sleep, after having thought bitterly over the want of affection evinced for her by Conty. She was awakened by hearing the door of the adjoining room, in which her sister slept, open, and then the words,—  
“ Are you asleep, Bee ? ”

“ I am awake now. What is the matter, Conty—are you ill ? ”

“ No, I am not ill, but I am very un-

happy," replied Constance, with a sob ; and she laid her head on the pillow beside her sister, and Beatrice felt that her face was wet with tears.

" Do come into my room, Bee ; my bed is larger than yours, and I cannot bear being alone and away from you. You will always love me, Bee ; do not let anything ever come between us. I have nobody but you."

" Darling, you must not say that ; it is wrong to Hubert."

" Hubert is very good and kind, but he can never be to me what you are, Bee ; you are like my second self ; and oh ! now that the time is come, I feel afraid of going away and leaving you. How I wish you were coming with me."

“I do not think Hubert would re-echo that wish, kind as he is,” said Beatrice, trying to speak cheerfully. “But, darling, let me say one thing, and please listen to me: you have chosen Hubert to be your husband, and I feel sure he is so good and true, and will do all he can to make you happy. I like him more than I can say; and he loves you so very dearly, Conty.”

“Poor Hubert!” murmured Conty, in a low voice, “I know he does, and it makes me quite sorry.”

“Conty, to-morrow you are going to tell him that you will love, cherish, and obey him; darling, those must not be idle words; you must will that they shall be true. You must do what I am afraid you have

never done yet, you must try and love him with your whole heart."

"Oh ! I begin to see now that I have been all wrong," moaned Conty despairingly ; "but it is too late ; what shall I do ? I am so miserable."

"You must pray, darling. God will help you, if you are really trying to do right."

"It is too late to go back now, Bee."

"I suppose it is," replied Beatrice doubtfully. "Still, Conty, anything would be better than to marry a man and make him miserable ; it would be such a dreadful wrong towards him."

"No, there is no use thinking of it, Bee ; it is useless to talk of it, but the thought of Guy haunts me day and night, and all that Mrs Goring said, and I know now that

I shall never love anybody as I did Guy."

The words rose to Beatrice's lips asking her sister why then she had acted so cruelly to Guy, but they remained unspoken. After a time Constance grew quieter, and at last fell asleep, her head on her sister's shoulder. Beatrice dared not move for fear of disturbing her. It was long before she herself forgot all her troubles, doubts and fears, and when at last sleep came to her relief, she was haunted by a series of dreams, in which everything was pervaded by a sense of general misery and confusion.





## CHAPTER V.

JULY was drawing to a close ; London was hot, dusty and oppressive ; vans laden with furniture were to be seen in all directions. Evidently the great exodus marking the end of the season had begun. Beatrice longed for a breath of country air. Mrs Annesley was trying to persuade her husband that something must soon be settled with regard to their summer plans ; the children, she declared, wanted change of air. Colonel Annesley as usual was in

difficulties, and told his wife that she must content herself with lodgings in some quiet sea-side place. Constance had been at the English lakes and in Ireland, and had written that morning to her father, telling him Hubert had been ordered to drink the waters at Homburg, and that they proposed starting for that place on the first of August. She entreated him to allow Beatrice to accompany them, adding that, of course, no expense would be entailed on him by acceding to her request. Beatrice was delighted at the prospect, for she had felt the separation from her sister very much, and she had thought Conty's letters very unsatisfactory. That her sister was not happy she felt sure, and she looked forward to being

of some help and comfort to her when they should be together. Mrs Annesley made many objections to the plan, declaring she could not be left alone with the children; but Colonel Annesley overruled them all, and told her he had quite decided on letting Beatrice accompany the Denzils, as he considered the offer too good to be refused. And the last days in London were spent by Beatrice in hastening her preparations to join Conty on the first of August, on which day the Denzils proposed leaving London for Brussels. Beatrice's joy at being once more with her sister was great, and her excitement at finding herself for the first time abroad, seeing new places and strange things, was unbounded.

Hubert, who had travelled a good deal, was greatly amused by the intense interest she displayed in everything, and he was never weary of answering her questions, and taking her to see the sights in all the different places at which they stayed. Her intelligence pleased him, and her good temper and high spirits made her a most agreeable companion. At Homburg they found several friends of Hubert's, and among others a cousin of his, Lady Clementina Lawleigh, who was staying there with her husband and children. She welcomed the new - comers warmly, told Constance she had heard so much of her beauty, settled that they should make a rule of always dining together at the Kursaal and letting a few friends join them. She ex-

pressed a hope that the sisters were lawn-tennis players, adding that it was one of the few amusements the place offered. Lady Clementina was a very pretty woman, about the middle height, her figure inclining to a certain amount of *embonpoint*, very blonde, and with a complexion so pure and delicate that she had indeed often been most unjustly accused of painting herself. The mouth and chin were faultless, as also the way the small head was poised on her shoulders. The only features in which any fault might be found were the eyes and eyebrows, both somewhat wanting in colour. Lady Clementina would often say that if she could summon up courage and darken her eyebrows, how much she would improve her beauty; perhaps having so

much to boast of induced her to let well alone. She had married when only seventeen, and was at this time twenty-eight years of age. Her husband had been originally in the army, but having left it had latterly held two rather important posts as consul, and was now minister at —. The life suited Lady Clementina, who had lived as a child much abroad, and the ease and *laisser-aller* of continental society was much to her taste. She was apt to ridicule and make fun of everything English as slow and dull. She was a remarkably good linguist.

The Lawleighs were at Homburg for their health ; it was a place they both liked, and they were settled in an apartment only a few doors from the one occupied by the

Denzils in Ferdinand Strasse. Constance was delighted with her new friends, and quite disposed to meet Lady Clementina's advances with corresponding warmth. She expressed her delight to Hubert, who said,—

“ I quite agree with you in thinking Clem beautiful, and she is always very well dressed. She talks well and amusingly ; but is not very particular as to what she says, provided always she can say something which is entertaining or clever. I confess that I do not care very much for Horace Lawleigh, he is so ill-natured ; now Clem is only ill-natured when she has a good story to tell, but Lawleigh always is ; he loves gossip and scandal and the spreading of evil reports ; he always likes looking

at the worst side of everybody and everything, be they his friends or his enemies, and he is such a selfish fellow too. I never could make out why Clem married him, and the strangest part of it is that she took some trouble to do so, for Horace was very slow in coming to the point. Perhaps he thought marrying would entail some sacrifices, though I do not suppose he gives up much for her, for there never was a man who lives more completely for himself than Horace Lawleigh."

"Well, there must be a great deal of good in her then," observed Constance, "since she does not look at all like a discontented, cross woman, but as bright and jolly as possible."

"Clem never had much feeling, and so, I

suppose, she goes her way and lets him go his."

"It strikes me that you are rather ill-natured yourself, Hubert. I feel sure I shall like Lady Clementina very much, and I intend to see as much of her as I can."

"I daresay you will like her up to a certain point; but, to tell you the truth, she is hardly the person I should care for you to make your greatest friend of."

"I suppose you do not consider it the duty or privilege of a husband to select his wife's friends," replied Constance indignantly.

"I think she should show some consideration for her husband's opinion on that subject. By-the-bye, I met one of the most agreeable of men this afternoon."

“Who?” asked Constance, with animation.

“A very dear old friend of mine—in fact, he is my godfather.”

“An old man!” she replied, in a tone of disappointment; “I suppose he is dull then. I hoped you had met somebody amusing.”

“I back Sir John Hardcastle to be better company than five men out of fifty, old or young, and I must beg, Conty, that you will try and be as pleasant to him as you can.”

“I suppose you consider that as a husband ought to have the right of choosing his wife’s lady friends, the same right extends to the selection of her men friends.”

Hubert got scarlet, as he always did when annoyed, and was about to make an

angry retort, when Beatrice, putting her arm through her sister's, said, laughing,—

“ You are tired with your walk and the hot sun, Conty, and are getting quite cross. I like old men much better than young ones, Hubert, and intend to do my best to cut Conty out with Sir John, though I daresay, like all men, he will be attracted by her pretty face, and will quite overlook the attraction of her poor little brown sister. I shall have to remind him of the violet which hides its charms from mortal eyes, only I am afraid it would be scarcely carrying out the theory of the violets charms, suggesting them of myself.” Beatrice talked on, saying any nonsense that came into her head, till they reached home, and then she accompanied her sister to her room.

“Conty, darling !” she exclaimed, “you must not be so cross with Hubert ; no man will stand it.”

“He is so tiresome,” replied Constance, wearily ; “every day I feel more and more what a mistake I have made ; we shall never like the same things or people ; never agree in anything. Oh ! what a fool I have been.”

“You will be a greater fool still if you go on repeating it to yourself.”

“One cannot help one’s thoughts ; do you suppose I should always be going over the past to myself if I could help it ? I would only too gladly try and forget. I assure you, Bee, I can quite understand people who take to drinking chloral or laudanum, or anything to make themselves sleep and forget.

Hour after hour I lie awake at night, thinking and thinking till I feel I could go mad ; and when I do go to sleep I wake up with a horrible fear that I have been talking in my sleep. My own words wake me, and then I ask myself what I may have said, or Hubert may have heard. I have been married now three months, and I feel as if it were three years. If it is like this now, how am I to get through the rest of my life ? ”

“ Poor Conty,” said Bee, sadly, as she sat gazing at her sister with a great look of pity written in her large, dark eyes. “ What can I say to you ? It is your life now ; you must fight against yourself ; you must look it in the face bravely ; it is worse than useless to think of what might have been. They say

the best remedy against all sorrow is employment ; you must try and occupy yourself more."

" How ? and with what ? I cannot paint like you do, or play, for I do not care much for music, or reading either. What can I do with myself ? "

" You must try and like the last two things. Hubert loves music, and he likes reading aloud, and reads very well too."

" Yes, but he likes the sort of books I don't care for."

" But you must make yourself take an interest in them ; if you try to like what he likes, you will have more in common with him, and grow to care more for him."

" I don't *dislike* Hubert, only I do not

and never shall love him, Bee," cried Conty, despairingly.

" You cannot be certain of that ; there is so much that is loveable in Hubert."

" Not in my eyes."

" Do not admit that even to yourself. Try rather to make a resolution, to do your duty, and to be less cold to him."

" I *have* made resolutions over and over again. I have prayed to do what I ought but my prayers seem just like that smoke coming out of that chimney," and she pointed to the window. " All my good resolutions end in nothing ; they are exactly like that smoke, I tell you,—look how it ascends curling upwards in faint blue streaks ; one waft of the stronger air, it bends and comes down again ; the stronger

air, in my case, being my own wickedness."

"But, Conty, I do not believe you would be willing, or that you even wish, to go back to your old life ?"

"I don't know," replied her sister, after a pause ; "it is a question I have often asked myself."

"But you would never like to give up all your luxuries, all the things you enjoy now, all that make your life pleasant to you ?"

"That is true ; and cannot you see how unhappy that makes me ? It feels so dishonest to care for all I gain by marriage, and not at all for the man who gives them to me."

"If you feel this really and truly, you

will grow to care more for the man who lavishes these good things on you as freely as Hubert does ; for what does he think of from morning to night but your pleasure ? ”

“ Only my pleasure must always be found in being with him, never away from him, and that is to me wearisome.”

“ It is very natural all the same, Conty, for he loves you so intensely,—he is never happy when you are out of his sight ; he sits and watches you sometimes with such a look of love and admiration on his face that it is quite touching.”

“ I know he does, and I am ashamed to say it bores me dreadfully. Oh, Bee, I am dreadfully wicked ! I long to get away from my thoughts, and that is one reason

why I like seeing people. I seem to forget myself then.”

“ Yes, I understand, Conty ; nothing, I’m sure, is more difficult than to keep one’s thoughts in order ; of course I have never been tried as you are, but still I can quite understand it in a great measure. I remember, during the last few months I was at school, how often Miss Leslie used to talk to me on this subject. She said one day that evil thoughts were sure to produce evil actions, and that people who had no control over their thoughts were as though they lived in a house inhabited by a hundred devils. Our words, our actions, our very souls are coloured by our thoughts. A thought seldom remains a thought—sooner or later it is developed into an action.”

“ Ah ! but how are we to get away from our thoughts ? ”

“ I am sure I do not know, unless it is by saying to one's self, I will not think of these things,—by turning away from them as we should turn away or shut our eyes on an unpleasant object.”

“ What a much better nature you have than I, Bee. I wish I were more like you.”

“ Don't say that, Conty ; you know what is right as well as I do ; and if you only make up your mind to try, you will succeed. Anyhow, we shall meet Sir John Hardcastle to-night, and you must do your best to be nice and pleasant to him ; for, of course, as Hubert is so fond of him, he will be very anxious Sir John should

like you, whom he loves beyond all things. So, now, ring for Stevens; put on one of your prettiest dresses, and make yourself as charming and attractive as possible."





## CHAPTER VI.

SIR JOHN HARDCastle was a tall man, a little over six feet in height. His figure, however, was a good deal bent. He was at this time about seventy-three years of age. His hair, which was nearly white, was still thick; his face a handsome one, in spite of the many furrows time had traced upon it; the nose rather large, the eyes keen, and overhung with strongly-marked eyebrows. A kindly light shone from the eyes, especially when they rested

on any young person or child. His manners were very winning and full of courtesy, presenting a marked contrast to those of the rising generation. To the very young he was almost affectionate ; to the older, always genial, at times almost deferent, as if he thought it worth while to hear the opinions of others as well as to speak himself. He had never married. Whether he had had some disappointment early in life was best known to himself, but he had enjoyed every qualification to earn for himself the affection of women, save perhaps the enjoyment of a large income.

His father had been in the diplomatic service, and had married an Italian lady of good family but possessed of no fortune. Sir John had been his only son, having one

sister, Mrs Barrington, now dead, and whose son, Captain Barrington, was staying with Sir John at Homburg.

At his father's death, Sir John had found himself the possessor of a moderate income. He had rooms in Curzon Street, and the larger portion of the year found him an ever welcome visitor in the country houses of his old friends and his newer acquaintances ; for, as he would observe, had he not continued adding to the list of his friends, what would have become of him at seventy-three ? for at that age he had continually the sorrow of seeing those who had been associated with the happiest period of his life passing away. He was a delightful companion, full of information derived not only from books, but from

quick perception, and great powers of reasoning and reflection, and from the constant companionship of interesting and remarkable people. His mind was filled with curious stories ; as he would say sometimes, it was like an old warehouse, full of odds and ends of past times ; but he still had a keen interest in all that was passing around him. There was a freshness of thought and a power of enjoyment, which his seventy - three years had not impaired.

He was standing on the steps of the Kursaal talking to the Lawleighs, when the Denzils, accompanied by Beatrice, arrived in time for dinner. He came forward at once to be presented to Constance, glancing admiringly at her lovely

face, and expressed the pleasure he felt at making her acquaintance. .

“ Your husband is my godson, Lady Denzil, and a very good one too. I have never had my mind troubled by the responsibilities I undertook for him. You must introduce me to your sister, and allow me to present my nephew, Allan Barrington, to you both.”

The latter came forward as his uncle spoke. He had been contemplating in surprise the beauty of his old friend Hubert’s wife, and after a few words to Constance walked by her sister’s side into the dining-room, where a table had been set apart for the small party. Seated and awaiting their arrival, were a lady and gentleman, whom Lady Clementina intro-

duced to the new-comers as the Marchese and Marchesa Arlini.

“The latter,” she observed, “speaks English perfectly ; the marchese both speaks and understands it, when he chooses,” she added, laughing.

The marchese made a low bow, and said in French,—

“Lady Clementina knows that she is privileged, and can say what she pleases.”

The marchese was not a plain man, but the expression of his face Beatrice thought decidedly unprepossessing. He was dressed like an Englishman, and wore a moustache. His hair and eyes were very dark, his face pale and slightly marked from smallpox ; and he had an eye-glass constantly in one

eye. His wife was a delicate, slightly-made woman, with a countenance which took Beatrice's fancy at once. The features were all regular, and the eyes very fine; an abundance of raven black hair, growing rather low on the forehead, and bound round the head in heavy plaits. There was an expression of intense melancholy written on every feature, and more especially in the eyes.

For a few minutes Beatrice felt unable to withdraw her eyes from the marchesa's face, there was something inexpressibly attractive to her in that sad-looking woman.

“Homburg is very full just now,” said Mr Lawleigh to Constance; “you will be sure to find many friends. Somehow people

seem able to cram a good deal of amusement into their days. You can dance, if you like it, as well as play lawn-tennis, when you are not engaged in water-drinking and bathing."

"Where do they dance?" inquired Constance.

"At the Kursaal, twice a-week. I do not know what you may think of it, but it does not strike me as being a very attractive way of spending the evening, as the rooms are crowded with a very queer-looking set of people, and the atmosphere, needless to say, is stifling."

"What a thing youth is," said Sir John to Beatrice, who was sitting between him and Captain Barrington; "you would think having to get up at six o'clock would in-

cline a rational being to think twice before dancing till twelve at night."

"That does not seem to be the opinion of the Princess Marie Basileff," said Captain Barrington. "I never saw anybody enjoy dancing more than she did last night. She was in the wildest spirits, and almost dissolved into tears when Lady Clementina at last insisted on leaving."

"Yes," observed Lady Clementina, laughing, "Marie Basileff is rather a handful."

"Who is she?" inquired Constance.

"She is a Russian girl," replied Lady Clementina. "She is here with her mother and sister. The father has an appointment at the Russian Court. The mother is a remarkably clever woman, very agree-

able and amusing when she happens to be in a good temper."

" Which is not always the case, Lady Clementina," remarked Allan Barrington, laughing.

" Yes, we had a little specimen of what the Princess Basileff is like when she is out of temper," replied Lady Clementina. " The other day Captain Barrington and I were calling at the Basileffs," she continued, turning to Constance. " The Princess had been calling on old Lady Selby of Kirby, and had evidently been considerably bored by her visit. Captain Barrington and I had been sitting with the two girls, and after some time the Princess Basileff returned home."

" Oh ! I am bored," she cried, " I am

half dead. What a dreadful woman is old Selby ; she is simply an idiot," and she tore off her bonnet rather than untied it, and flung it to the further end of the room, and then sat down, and, lighting a cigarette, seemed somewhat more composed, and proceeded to give us an account of her visit to poor old Lady Selby. "I really believe," she began, "that old woman thinks that we Russians worship Jupiter and Minerva. Count Barinoff, who was calling there, also began talking with me about the division of the Eastern and Western Churches. I saw a puzzled look steal over her face, and she said, 'Why, I thought all Russians were of the religion of the Greeks.' I said that certainly some of us worshipped Bacchus and

Venus, and also Plutus, but that we did consider ourselves Christians for all that ; however, I saw she did not believe me, and remained thoroughly mystified. She then went on to tell us that she knew as a fact that Lady Selby had her wig brushed on her head, so as to delude herself into a belief it was her own hair ; in fact, as she added, ‘that old woman is capable of any *bêtise*.’ She told us numbers of amusing anecdotes of things that Lady Selby had said and done at different times ; how much of them was true I know not, but I was immensely amused, and so were you, Captain Barrington.”

“ What a good memory you have, Lady Clementina,” replied the latter ; “ you could not have repeated her words more accur-

ately had you taken notes of them at the time."

" You must make acquaintance with the Basileffs," continued Lady Clementina to Constance, " for they are quite the pleasantest people here, and the eldest daughter, Sophie, is really charming."

" When she is not treating people *du haut en bas* in her favourite fashion, which is as often the case as not," observed the Marchese Arlini.

" You never get on with her, Arlini," said Horacc Lawleigh ; " I think you made your admiration for her too patent."

" I do not admire the Princess Sophie," replied the marchese, with a sneer.

" She thinks too much of herself ; besides, you take care to give nobody a chance of

speaking to her, when you are of the company."

"Well, I confess she is more to my taste than the Princess Komarom, or Madame Duvallon."

A scowl passed over the marchese's face, and Beatrice felt her repugnance to him increase, and she found herself wondering how such a charming woman, as the Marchese Arlini appeared to be, had ever consented to becoming his wife.

"We will go to the dancing to-morrow night, if you like," said Lady Clementina to Constance, "I daresay Miss Annesley will enjoy it."

"Oh ! very much," exclaimed Beatrice.

"And you will allow me the honour of dancing with you, then, I hope, Lady

Denzil," asked the marchese ; "in which case I shall not fail to attend."

"How odiously that man stared," thought Beatrice.

Hubert looked slightly annoyed, and said—

"I agree with Sir John,—sitting up late in a hot, stuffy room does not go well with getting up at six o'clock in the morning."

"But I don't feel obliged to get up early unless I choose," answered Constance ; "thank goodness, I am not obliged to drink the waters."

"Marchesa, you never come to any of the dancing parties," observed Lady Clementina ; "make up your mind and join us to-morrow."

"My dancing days are over," replied Madame Arlini, smiling.

“ Say rather they never have begun,” said her husband. “ My wife,” he continued, turning to Constance, “ sets her face against everything that is frivolous, unintellectual,—in fact, all that is sociable, I may say.”

The colour deepened on the marchesa’s pale face, but she only said,—

“ You must not believe that is quite true, Lady Denzil.”

“ It strikes me we shall have more society than enough,” said Hubert, “ according to your account, Clem.”

“ My dear boy, you did not come to Homburg to shut yourself up, I suppose. Your wife does not look as if she would enjoy that.”

“ Most certainly not,” answered Constance, energetically; “ I am prepared to

enjoy everything that comes in my way."

Here the marchese rose, the dinner being over, saying he had an appointment. His absence, however, was a matter of no regret to any of the party, as he had been very silent, only keeping up a steady stare at both the sisters, and especially at Constance, which had succeeded in irritating Hubert. Madame Arlini seemed as if her husband's departure had removed a weight from her shoulders. Mr Lawleigh proposed they should adjourn to the terrace outside the dining-room, and have their coffee served there.

Hubert observed to Horace Lawleigh that he thought the Italian marchese a very unattractive looking individual.

“ You are about right,” was the reply. “ He is a thorough brute ; he treats his wife infamously, and she is a really charming woman. He is off now to keep a gambling appointment at the house of a friend, to whose wife he is for the time being devoted. They say he is clever, but I never heard him say anything which would give you that idea. He has nearly broken his wife’s heart, and his father is constantly deplored Arlini’s wasted life and talents ; upon my word, as far as I can see, he has not a redeeming quality, and we only tolerate him for her sake.”

After their coffee, Lady Clementina proposed to take a turn in the garden below, and she went off with Constance, Hubert, and Captain Barrington.

“ Let us sit down on those chairs,” said Mr Lawleigh, “ and we will look at the people as they pass below, and we will have a good go in at them all. I feel in a very scandalous frame of mind to-night.”

“ Is that something very unusual to you, Mr Lawleigh ? ” asked Madame Arlini, smiling.

“ Well, it is not a sensation to which I am wholly unaccustomed, marchesa ; let us all tell everything we know about everybody, present company, of course, excepted.”

“ Heaven forbid ! ” said Sir John ; “ that would indeed be a large order, considering the number of people here to-night, and the many one knows something of.”

“ Here come the Sylvers,” cried Mr

Lawleigh ; “ they will do very well to begin with ; not a bad-looking couple, are they ? She was a beauty four years ago, but she is terribly gone off ; she has lost her complexion completely.”

“ But she has a charming face,—so simpatica,” said Madame Arlini ; “ I am sure she is a nice woman.”

“ Yes, she is, but not a very lively one. She spends a thousand a-year on her dress. Sylver likes her to dress well ; they say it was a *mariage de convenance*, and that she rather disliked him ; but she has proved her sense by making the best of him, and appreciating the solid advantages of fifty thousand a-year, so there is something to be said in favour of such marriages.”

“ A *mariage de convenance* is a dan-

gerous experiment though," replied Madame Arlini, in a low voice.

"Do you not think she may have found out that he was worthy of being liked for his own sake?" asked Beatrice, indignantly.

"No," said Mr Lawleigh; "it never struck me that there was anything at all interesting in Sylver; he is a dull, heavy fellow."

"But he may be good and kind for all that," persisted the girl.

"You know the Vallances, Sir John?" continued Mr Lawleigh; "they only arrived yesterday. He cares for nothing but his food and his drink, and is totally ignorant of the real merit of either. He is what I call a coarse feeder; real good

cookery is quite wasted on him. Now, I consider the art of dining well is a study, and one which requires a good deal of cultivation."

"It is certainly one *you* have not neglected, Mr Lawleigh," replied the marchesa ; "but as I have often been the gainer by it, I ought not to say a word as to its merits."

"A really good dinner is a thing to be thankful for," continued Mr Lawleigh ; "besides, good cookery is wholesome, bad the reverse,—though, I am not one of those people who reject everything that is good because it is unwholesome."

"Wait till you are as old as I am, Lawleigh," remarked Sir John ; "you may have to pay a little more regard to the

qualities of digestible and indigestible then."

"No, I shall not, for I never resist temptation; and there are two things I cannot resist—a good dinner and a good French novel; I am not more particular as to the moral qualities of the latter than I am as to the digestibility of my dinner."

"Ah!" said Sir John, dryly, "some people are fond of loading their stomachs with unwholesome food and their minds with unwholesome literature. What a fine face Lady Vallance has!" he continued.

"Yes," replied Mr Lawleigh; "she always reminds me of a Roman empress."

"I am not sure whether that is a compliment," observed Madame Arlini.

"I always wonder why she married Val-

lance," said Mr Lawleigh, "for she is a clever woman. There is a good deal of suppressed fire about her, too; only she has got herself well under control."

"There is something wanting in her face," said Madame Arlini, musingly; "I think she does not look happy."

"What a bright girl she was, ten years ago!" remarked Sir John,—"full of life and merriment. What a sin it was, forcing her, as they did, to marry Vallance!"

"Oh, ye powers!" cried Mr Lawleigh, suddenly; "why, here comes the venerable Sarah I had not an idea she was in Homburg. Look at the dear creature bobbing her wizened old head about! How like she is to my Japanese pug. I feel quite an affection for her. What would

she be without those adorable little curls ? I have always wondered how she contrived to keep them that colour ; for, by every rule as to the fitness of things, they should be snow-white by this time. I should like to read the records that woman could write of her life, provided only she would write them honestly. What stories she could tell ! Why, no novel ever written could come up to what her revelations would be."

" It is a matter of astonishment to me," said Sir John, " how she can go on year after year leading the life she does. It ought to pall on her and disgust her. Well, human nature is incomprehensible sometimes."

" I do not believe, Sir John, she has any identity of her own," replied Horace

Lawleigh. “She is a thing created by circumstances ; she is a puppet, and the people whose society she frequents pull the strings. She must be hard upon eighty, surely !”

“Eighty !” cried Beatrice, aghast. “But look at her dress, her hair — everything about her !”

“Extraordinary, but true, all the same, Miss Annesley. But here comes an individual of a very different type from any who have hitherto passed ;” and Mr Lawleigh pointed towards a young-looking man—slight, and rather below the middle height, wearing a grey felt hat, and smoking a cigarette. He was talking earnestly and rather impressively to a tall man, a good deal his senior.

“Who is he?” asked Beatrice, with interest.

“That is Count Barinoff, one of the most promising diplomats they have in Russia.”

“He is not very remarkable to look at,” replied Beatrice, in a tone of disappointment.

“Perhaps not, Miss Annesley. Still, he is a remarkable man now, and, if I mistake not, will some day become even more so.”

“I wonder what he is really like, if one could get below the surface?” said Madame Arlini. “To look at him and hear him talk, you would think him clever, agreeable, *bon enfant*, but not very deep. I wonder whether he is as honest as he looks.”

“Honest!” replied Mr Lawleigh, laughing—“honest, and a diplomate!”

“The two need not be impossible in connection,” said the Marchesa, hotly.

“There are so few exceptions that it rather tends to prove the rule. Naturally you will be inclined to disagree with me, but all men, marchesa, are not of the same type as your uncle,” replied Mr Lawleigh, with a bow.

“Do you mean to say,” asked Beatrice, “that because a man is an ambassador or minister, or engaged in politics, he cannot be honest? That would be a dreadful idea; for how can he hope to succeed in influencing others, if he be not sincere himself?”

“I do not see, Miss Annesley, how a

man in that position can afford to be honest. Many things are essential to complete success in that line of life. First, a man should be without passions, and devoid of the power of hatred ; those qualities being essentially human, few people are free from them. Secondly, he should have the power of reading people's thoughts, divining their wishes, without betraying his own. Thirdly, he should have a good temper ; he need not be cruel by nature, but he should stick at nothing, cost others what it may, to carry out successfully the ends he has in view."

"Of course it is needless to observe that your model diplomat is to be devoid of a conscience," said Madame Arlini, scornfully.

“He would find it a very inconvenient commodity, Marchesa ; and I doubt many of them being much troubled on that score.”

“Surely you do not agree with Mr Lawleigh ? ” said Beatrice, turning to Sir John.

“I agree with him up to a certain point ; that is, I think it desirable for a man who really aims at success in a diplomatic career to be devoid of passions of all sorts, for he who judges without passion judges fairly and honestly, and is more likely to see all sides of a question.”

“Another point I should recommend to a diplomate’s attention,” continued Mr Lawleigh, “is a happy talent for flattering the vanity of others, by appearing much im-

pressed by their opinion. Nothing blinds people like that. He should be able also to appreciate and quickly seize all the advantages circumstances or accidents throw in his way."

"A man who does that well," said Sir John, "is a clever man; but a great man is one who himself creates and brings the advantages into existence."

"That is of course true," replied Mr Lawleigh. "Then he should be endowed with a good deal of self-confidence, that imposes on others, besides often suggesting the doing of greater things than a less confident man would have been induced to undertake."

"Certainly, Mr Lawleigh," observed Madame Arlini; "your diplomat will be

an admirable individual. He seems endowed with every vice, and hardly a virtue to counterbalance them."

"Ah! virtue is a very fine thing; but I do not think you must look for it in a political atmosphere."

"I think your views sound horrible," said Beatrice, in a tone of disgust. "I cannot see how a man can be great in anything unless he has some virtues."

"I wonder what virtue consists in?" asked Mr Lawleigh, with a cynical smile. "I daresay we should all differ in our ideas."

"I do not consider a person virtuous," remarked Madame Arlini, "simply because he is free of sin, or does not jar on our

feelings. Virtue is something far higher and greater—it is something positive."

"Yes," said Beatrice, warmly, "that is very true."

"Nature is full of contradictions," said Mr Lawleigh. "Circumstances blind us very much in our opinions of what is right and what is wrong."

"Nature is not full of contradictions, Mr Lawleigh," returned the Marchesa quickly; "it is the *humanity* in nature which causes the contradictions."

"I say human nature *is* queer," replied Mr Lawleigh. "Now, Miss Annesley, you hate insincerity,—well, so do I, but probably not at all for the same reasons. I hate insincerity in another person, not because it is wicked, but because

I have a dread of being taken in myself."

"Here come the rest of our party," observed Sir John. "I suppose they have had enough music; I think your sister is looking tired, and, as it is nearly ten o'clock, I shall begin to make a move homewards."

"Our roads lie in the same direction, I think, Sir John," said Constance, "so we may as well walk home in company."

"I shall expect to see you both to-morrow morning," cried Lady Clementina, as the two sisters moved away.





## CHAPTER VII.

**T**HE following morning Beatrice and her sister walked down to the springs soon after seven o'clock, Hubert having already gone on. Beatrice enjoyed the brisk morning air, and was in almost wild spirits. She was never weary of repeating: "It is all so new, so utterly unlike anything I have ever seen." Arrived at the springs, they found their friends already engaged in water drinking, and were soon persuaded to taste it them-

selves. Mr Lawleigh greeted the sisters with some bunches of lovely roses still dripping with the early dew. Lady Clementina, who was attired in a most elaborate costume of pale pink and grey, in which she was looking quite lovely Beatrice thought, came up and said,—

“Lady Denzil, let me introduce you and your sister to the Princess Sophie Basileff and her sister Marie. I am sure you will be great friends.”

Constance looked first at the eldest sister, who was rather tall and slight, with a pale, delicate, patrician face, with very dark hair, but the impression left on her mind by the hasty glance was that the fine dark grey eyes, with a half-mocking, half-satirical expression in them, somewhat detracted

from the charm of the otherwise beautiful face. The younger sister was on a much smaller scale, with a dainty fairy-like figure. Her face, though hardly pretty, with its irregular features, was full of *espièglerie*; mischief seemed to lurk in the two dimples on her cheeks, and the small turned-up nose to be full of impertinence and fun; it was altogether a bright and happy little face. She cut into her sister's expressions of pleasure in making Lady Denzil's acquaintance by saying, in very good English, with the faintest possible foreign accent,—

“I am delighted to see you; I like English people so much, and I know so few. I shall want you to tell me all about England, and your life there must be so pleasant; you seem to be so free and able to go about

and enjoy yourselves, and to have lots of fun. I know English people best from books, and through my English governess, and I have read quantities of English novels. You must be my great friend, Miss Annesley," she continued, turning to Beatrice. "I wonder which is the eldest—you or I? I am seventeen; how old are you?"

Beatrice, slightly startled, but decidedly amused, replied she was her senior by a year.

"Oh! that is nothing," answered the young lady, seating herself on a bench close by, and inviting Beatrice to do the same. "You must tell me all about yourself; what you like and what you hate."

At this moment Sir John Hardcastle came up to where they were sitting, and

asked whether they could make room for him.

“ It is all very well for you young people this walking so early in the morning ; but my old legs find it rather fatiguing. What, are you going already, Princess ? ” he added, as Marie rose in obedience to a summons from a quiet elderly lady who came up at that moment.

“ In one minute, Fräulein,” she cried. “ I must be going now, Miss Annesley, for we have to go into the town to execute a commission for my mother ; but I shall see you by-and-by, and do not forget that we are to be great friends. *Au revoir,* ” and she darted off to join her sister and their duenna.

“ Now, tell me something of your father

Miss Annesley," said Sir John. "I have not seen him for years; but I used often to meet him formerly at the Warreners at Shipley. Does he hunt as much as he used to?"

"Oh no! We live in London now. I am so sorry we left dear old Redsands; the country about was so lovely."

"Yes; the scenery in that part of Yorkshire is very fine."

"I do not know much about other parts of England, but I am sure there is no county like Yorkshire."

"And no people like its natives—eh, Miss Annesley?"

"Were you ever at Redsands, Sir John?"

"No, I never was. Why was it called Redsands?"

"I am sure I don't know," answered the girl, "except that there was nothing red about it. The house was built of grey-stone, and covered with creepers, and we had such a pretty garden full of all the old-fashioned flowers."

"Ah! quite a garden after my own heart. I love the old flowers, and now-a-days, more often than not, you do not see them except in a cottage garden. The gardeners turn up their noses at everything that is not new, and their masters are foolish enough to listen to them. Now, among all roses, did you ever see one that could beat the dear old cabbage rose?"

"We had quantities of roses at Redsands, and we used to fill all the china jars in the house with pot-pourri."

“Delicious! Why did you never ask me to stay with you, Miss Annesley?”

“Well, seeing that I never saw you till yesterday, I do not see how I could help myself, Sir John,” replied Beatrice, laughing.

“Had you much of a neighbourhood at Redsands?”

“Not what I believe people would call a good neighbourhood, but we had some friends we liked, though rather far off, and papa used to take Conty and me to stay with them; but Mrs Annesley does not care about visiting; she is rather an invalid—at least she fancies herself one, which is as bad,” said Beatrice.

“Poor soul!” replied Sir John, “the real thing is bad enough, without cultivating a taste for it.”

“Ah!” said Constance, who had joined them, and seated herself beside Sir John, “I am afraid Mrs Annesley is one of those people who think bad health an excuse for being as unreasonable and selfish as possible—in fact, for doing exactly what they like themselves, without the smallest consideration for other people.”

“But, Conty, there is no doubt she is not strong, for I can hardly believe any one who was really well would lead the life she does.”

“Tell me something of your Uncle Dick Annesley,” asked Sir John; “he used to be rather a friend of mine some years ago, though he was a good deal younger than myself, but he was a very queer man in some ways. The last time I ever met him

was at a great shorthorn sale at Colonel Wallington's. Your uncle was deeply interested in the breeding of those animals, I remember."

"I should think he was," replied Constance, "he cares more for those hideous mountains of fat than for anything else."

"No," said Beatrice ; "I think he divides his affections pretty equally between his shorthorns and his old blue china."

"One thing is certain, anyhow," observed Constance, "my uncle only takes an interest in what pleases and amuses himself. I do not care about my Uncle Dick, or his reverence, as we generally call him ; he is very domineering and selfish, and believes in himself to an extent which is almost incredible ; he never even tolerates a differ-

ence of opinion from any one else, and that does not help to make him an attractive member of society."

"Ah! but, Conty, he has his good points. Now and then he does very kind things."

"Yes, and never forgets to let you know he considers he has a claim on your gratitude. No, there is no use in trying to make a hero out of his reverence. I say he is a very selfish and narrow-minded man, and as obstinate as a pig; he only likes the society of those who make up to him, or admire his belongings. I do not mean his relations," added Lady Denzil, laughing, "for I believe he only looks upon them as necessary evils; thank goodness I never pandered to his selfishness."

"No, Conty, I do think you have honestly

done your best to be disagreeable to him. I shall never forget the day you threw the *Bradshaw* on the floor, and kicked it from one end of the room to the other ; how he glared at you ! ” and Beatrice burst into a fit of laughter at the recollection.

“ Oh, Lady Denzil ! ” exclaimed Sir John, pretending to look shocked.

“ Really, Sir John, you would have sympathised with me ; my uncle had been so particularly aggravating. There was a party of people staying in the house at the time. Mrs Annesley was not there ; she never goes, as my uncle frightens her out of her wits, After breakfast he desired me to find out what the rest of the party would prefer doing to amuse themselves, and to settle it and let him know the result. They elected

to drive to an old castle nine miles off, have luncheon there, and return home in time for dinner. Having done as he desired, I ventured into his den. Now, his particular sanctum is never a very delightful place to invade; first of all there is hardly room to move in it, and never more than one chair on which you can sit down, the others being piled with books, pamphlets, and newspapers, generally on agricultural subjects. The tables are strewed with every sort of conceivable litter, pipes, old driving-gloves, whips,—all of them most unclerical-looking objects; old hats too abound, and always to be seen are several pairs of hob-nail boots, varying in thickness from one inch to something less. On this occasion he was perhaps in a bad temper beforehand, anyhow, when

I told him what we had decided upon doing, he objected in very strong language, telling me I never seemed to have the slightest consideration for him or his horses, and that it was preposterous to propose such a long expedition on a hot day. I longed to tell him what a pity it was that he encouraged the same regimen in his stables and among his servants that he pursued himself, namely, inordinate eating and drinking, and no exercise ; however, we contrived to have rather a breezy conversation, and I ended by walking out of his room, begging him for the future to make all his arrangements for entertaining his guests himself."

" However, Conty, he did tell you afterwards he was much obliged to you for taking so much trouble about the people

staying with him, and he gave you a lovely piece of old lace that very day."

"Yes, that is just like Uncle Dick ; he always thinks giving one a present makes everything smooth. I suppose it is the way he treats his dependants, otherwise I cannot imagine why they stay with him."

"Yes," said Sir John, "your account of your uncle goes very much with my recollection of him and his peculiarities. He was a clever man, though, a very good scholar, and had a wonderful memory."

"Oh ! he is no fool," replied Constance, laughing ; "his worst enemies would not accuse him of that."

"He never married, did he ?"

"Fortunately not. I should pity the

woman who was so left to herself as to become Uncle Dick's wife. However, I am sure, Sir John, that it must bore you very much hearing our family history."

"Not at all, my dear Lady Denzil; how can I help being interested, when my godson Hubert has become a member of your family? Besides, it always is pleasant to me to hear anything of friends I have known formerly."

"I want you to take a turn with me," said Lady Clementina, coming up to Constance; "there are one or two people I want to introduce to you. By-the-bye, you have made a victim of poor Captain Vavasour," she continued, as they walked down the promenade; "he raves about you already in a way which is quite tedious.

So I promised to present him to you ; he is not clever, but a good sort of fellow ; he knows everybody, has heaps of money, and plays lawn-tennis very well. The father made all the money in tea or something,—here he comes.”

Captain Vavasour was a good-looking young man, with pale blue eyes and fair hair. He began by expressing rather warmly the delight he felt in making Lady Denzil’s acquaintance. Lady Clementina left him beside Constance, while she joined some other people ; and after a very few minutes, Captain Vavasour and his companion found themselves in a flow of conversation, almost as if they were old acquaintances. There was nothing original, or even very amusing, in his remarks. His

compliments, of which he was very lavish, were couched in a language attempting no disguise. He seemed to know the name of everybody, and told her something about them all, good, bad, or indifferent. Constance thought him very merry and pleasant. Tired with walking, they were sitting on a bench when Hubert and Beatrice came up.

“We have been looking for you every-where, and wondered what had become of you. I thought you were with Clem,” said Hubert, as his eye fell on Captain Vavasour, lounging by his wife’s side.

“Captain Vavasour, let me introduce you to my sister, Miss Annesley, and to my husband,” said Constance, hastily. “Clem

only left us a few minutes ago," she continued, "as she wanted to speak to some friends she met."

"It is time to be going home," replied Hubert.

Constance extended her hand with a gracious smile to her new acquaintance, and told him she was quite willing to keep her promise of being his partner at lawn-tennis that afternoon, if Lady Clementina would make up the set.

"Who introduced that fellow to you, Conty?" asked her husband as they proceeded homewards. "Clem, I suppose."

"Yes; she says he is very pleasant; she likes him very much."

“ His looks belie him, then,” returned Hubert shortly ; “ for he looks like a fool. I have often met him in London, and always avoided him.”





## CHAPTER VIII.

**H**E first week at Homburg passed very pleasantly to both sisters. They made many acquaintances through Lady Clementina; and at Homburg, where you meet every one you know at least two or three times daily, acquaintances ripen rapidly. The Basileffs were, as Lady Clementina had observed, very attractive; the Princess Basileff herself had received both Constance and her sister very graciously. Of Sir John and his nephew

they saw a great deal ; and the former had struck up a great friendship with Beatrice,—the nephew entirely concurring in his uncle's praises of his young favourite.

The days which were so full of pleasure and amusement to the sisters were productive of less enjoyment to Hubert. He was greedy of his wife's society, and liked her to be with him constantly ; and this was a terrible infliction to Constance. Her continual rushing after excitement, as he described it, aroused his displeasure.

Beatrice strove to her utmost to make him happy, but she felt her efforts were unsuccessful. She took a great interest in his pursuits, in the books he was reading. She was always ready to be his companion, if he wished to walk ; but she

could not persuade her sister to forego one moment's amusement, or to give up anything she had willed to do.

One afternoon the sisters walked down to the tennis-ground, having promised to meet Lady Clementina there. On arriving under the trees, where later on Lady Clementina's tea-table was always a prominent feature—greatly to the satisfaction of her personal friends, and the object of a good deal of abuse from those who were not included in that circle—they found both the Lawleighs already sitting there, with a small party, lazily watching the players. The Basileffs were there, as well as Allan Barrington and Captain Vavasour.

“Come and sit by me, Bee,” cried Marie Basileff, whose friendship with the sisters had

made rapid strides. “Why are you so late? Sophie and I have been here ever so long.”

“Business before pleasure, you know, Marie, is an old saying,” replied Beatrice; “and I have been very busy. I have been copying some letters for Hubert, and looking over the plans for the new schools he is going to build.”

“Ah! you are just the sort of person who is always doing something useful for other people, not like idle me. I am afraid I never do anything for anybody, but, selfishly speaking, I believe, after all, it is the best plan, otherwise one might be made a slave of.”

“Yes,” said Mr Lawleigh, puffing at his cigarette; “I can quite believe that you eschew the useful element, princess.”

“ You are quite right, Mr Lawleigh. I like my own way, and spend a good deal of time in trying to get it. The difficulties in my way rather increase my pleasure in striving after it. I do not like to be sat upon, for I have nothing self-denying or meek in my nature. I leave that to good people like Bee, who spends her life in working for other people.”

“ You do not give me the idea of being a meek person, Miss Annesley,” observed Horace Lawleigh. “ I hope you are not, for I hate meek people.”

“ I do not agree with you,” replied Beatrice, laughing. “ Meekness is a virtue; and if I felt I deserved the title, I should be proud of it.”

“ Oh no,” answered Mr Lawleigh ;

“meekness is so disgustingly *fade*. Meek people are supremely uninteresting. A strong desire always possesses me to try and get a rise out of them. A passionate nature commands one's sympathies so much more,—it is so human.”

“I do not think that is very high praise, Mr Lawleigh. It proves, at any rate, that it is an imperfect nature.”

“When you come to that, Miss Annesley, I do not follow you. I do not pretend to admire people because they are endowed with the qualities of seraphic beings. I am of the earth, earthy.”

“You need not tell us that!” exclaimed Marie. “Nobody who knows you would suspect you of an admiration for anything good or virtuous.”

“Nor you, princess, of a control over your tongue, when you are picking holes in your neighbour.”

“That is unfair,” retorted Marie, indignantly. “You have told us yourself that you have no sympathy for virtue *pure et simple*.”

“That may be true ; but one is willing to speak evil of oneself, yet still one may object to hearing other people do so.”

“Oh yes, Mr Lawleigh, we all know the saying, ‘Some people would rather speak evil of themselves than not speak at all of themselves.’ I never for one moment supposed that I do control my tongue ; but I do not think I am singular in the habit. I should hardly know where to go to for a good example ; and I think people who are

very self-controlled are just as uninteresting as meek people, for I do not believe they ever feel anything strongly."

"Then they would not be self-controlled, princess, for if you attach any meaning to the word, they must have something to control and subdue; and if they feel nothing, they do not require that effort. I appreciate self-control highly; it gives one such an overpowering superiority over others."

"Well, there is one thing which strikes me in your remarks," observed Marie; "you appear never to admire a thing because it is good in itself, but always because something can be got out of it to your personal advantage; that is surely not a very elevated way of looking at things."

"I told you before," replied Mr Law-

leigh, “that I have no sympathy with seraphic beings ; and I cannot say I have met with many.”

“I quite believe you,” replied Marie, pertly. “ You would agree with De la Rochefoucauld, ‘Il y a des gens dégoûtants avec du mérite, et d’autres qui plaisent avec des défauts.’ ”

“ I agree with him cordially, princess ; but I was going to say, you appear to think it is an evil disposition in me which prompts me to admire and practise a virtue because I find doing so is to my own advantage. Now, this illustrates a favourite theory of mine, that good often comes out of evil. If it is a virtue, and I practise it, I am doing what is right.”

“ Marie means,” said Beatrice, “that your

motive in so doing was not a good one. Your practising this virtue was an accident, and not a good intention on your part."

"With all due deference to you both," replied Mr Lawleigh, coolly, "I see nothing to be ashamed of in my sentiments."

"I quite believe you," said Marie, laughing; "we are all inclined to justify and be pitiful to those we love, and most of us, I imagine, love ourselves better than anybody else, and I daresay you are no exception to the rule."

"Yes, I admit I have a very tender sympathy for myself, and my own peccadilloes, and I take it that if most people look themselves and their actions well over, they will find uncommonly little to commend. Seneca, you know, says that

one part of our lives passes in doing ill ; the greater part in doing nothing ; the whole in doing anything, but what is right."

" Seneca may be right," said Beatrice, " but, anyhow, it is a melancholy reflection."

" I always find the result of my conversations with Mr Lawleigh very depressing," remarked Marie ; " he says horrible things, and makes out that everybody and everything is so bad."

" Well, princess, though I grieve to depress you, I only speak the truth ; many things are bad,—pleasant ones particularly so ; mind I do not say that I personally consider them to be bad, but they would, I have no doubt, be so judged by the seraphic beings we were talking of just now. There is great truth in what the Stoics asserted :

It is not things, but thoughts that hurt us."

"But, Mr Lawleigh," replied Beatrice, "do not you think that in many cases the thoughts may grow out of the things."

"I will not hear another word," cried Marie, springing from her chair; "very soon Mr Lawleigh will prove that nothing which is pleasant can be innocent, and that nothing which is wrong matters, and that it is only narrow-minded people who would be disposed to hold a different opinion. Let us begin playing, Bee; are you ready, Captain Vavasour?" she added, turning towards him. "Never mind about finishing your cigar. I daresay you have already smoked a great many more than are good for you. Why do you wear such a hideous

coat?" and she pointed to his flannel jacket, with red, orange, and black stripes.

"They are the Zingari colours; I am a great cricketer, princess," and he hastened to explain to her what they meant.

"That amuses me," replied the young girl, laughing, "because, last night, in the Kursaal gardens, I heard old Baroness Wolf talking about you to a German lady, who was inquiring why you wore those ugly colours, and the baroness, who piques herself on thoroughly understanding everything English, answered that it was the custom in England for the young gentlemen to ride races, and that they wore always some particular colours, and were in the habit of appearing in them on all sorts of occasions, and she ended by saying you

were a very great steeplechase rider. Are you?" she added.

"Never rode a steeplechase in my life, princess."

"Poor old woman!" said Mr Lawleigh; "see if I don't have some fun out of her about this."

"I do not mind if you do," replied Marie; "I think she is a rude, disagreeable old woman, I cannot bear her."

"Sir John," called out Lady Clementina, as she saw him approaching with Hubert, "you are just in time for some tea."

"Delighted to hear it, my lady, for, in spite of the heat, a cup of tea sounds refreshing, and a chair near you is even more acceptable. I must say you young people are perfect salamanders; how you

can stand playing lawn-tennis in such weather, I cannot imagine; indeed, you run the risk of sunstroke; as to your complexions, you seem to have no regard for them."

"I suppose you wish us to understand that we are looking perfect objects," said Lady Clementina, laughing.

"Well, you stand it better than most people would do. Miss Annesley comes after you, but Lady Denzil looks as if she might never recover from it."

Hubert's eye sought his wife's face, and he went up to her, saying,—

"I do wish you would be reasonable, Conty. Sir John is quite right; you look all manner of colours, and you will make yourself ill, which is of far more consequence."

“ I am not afraid of that,” replied Conty, impatiently ; “ I never felt better in my life.”

“ I shall not play any more this afternoon,” observed Beatrice ; “ you are quite right, Hubert ; I feel as if my face had been scorched.”

“ I believe, Miss Annesley, you have not yet recovered from the effects of the beating Lady Denzil and myself gave you to-day,” cried Captain Vavasour.

“ I think I shall be able to survive it though,” she replied, “ and hope to have a chance of turning the tables upon you to-morrow.”

Mr Lawleigh, accompanied by the Basileffs, had walked over to the other side of the tennis ground, where a number of people were sitting.

“Who is that lady to whom your husband is talking ?” asked Sir John of Lady Clementina.

“She is Horace’s especial adoration for the moment—the Princess Komarom ; she is a Hungarian, I believe, and as long as Horace can enjoy her society, and listen to the last scandals from Paris or Vienna, he is quite happy.”

“I have heard of her,” replied Sir John ; “she was in London two years ago ; she was said to be a very clever woman.”

“Of course she is clever,” answered Lady Clementina, “or she would scarcely succeed in keeping so many men hanging about her in the way she does, for her beauty is no longer at its best—in fact, she is getting quite *passée*.”

“Old Durand is hopelessly gone in that quarter,” observed Captain Vavasour. “He follows her about like a shadow, and glares at any one who ventures to speak to her. They were having a tremendous row this morning, judging from appearances. I passed them on my way from the springs; they were sitting on a bench. She had tears in her eyes, and he, I am afraid, was swearing.”

“What I want to know is,” observed Lady Clementina, “who was Prince Kom-arom? Did he ever exist, or is he a mythical personage?”

“Many people have asked the same question, Lady Clem. She told me, one day, the history of her marriage, and a precious queer story it was. Of course she had been an angel and he a demon.”

. “ Oh, do tell it me, Captain Vavasour. I have always felt so curious as to her history.”

“ For shame, Lady Clementina ! ” exclaimed Sir John ; “ I cannot believe it of you. Surely you do not wish that a confidence made by a lady to a gentleman on such a subject, should be repeated ? ”

“ I see no harm in it, Sir John ; we are only in *petite comité* here. I daresay she has told the same story, with variations, to dozens of other people.”

“ I think I had better not repeat the story,” said Captain Vavasour, doubtfully ; “ it might perhaps shock some of you.”

“ Much better not, I should think,” remarked Sir John, dryly, “ particularly

when you reflect in what society you happen to find yourself."

"Well," continued Lady Clementina, "you could tell me nothing which would astonish me about the Princess Komarom. She was at Spa one year when we were there, and she spent her time in trying to make a poor little Frenchwoman, Madame de la Vul, miserable. The Vicomte de la Vul was a horrid man; but his wife was devoted to him. He was on his good behaviour just then, as his wife, whose money was all in her own power, had paid all his debts for him. One day she and I were going out for a drive, and the Princess had invited De la Vul to go for a walk with her. When we returned home we found him awaiting us at the door of

the hotel. He came forward, saying, ‘I am glad you have returned home punctually ; for I have had to make a hundred excuses to the Princess, as she wished to stay out later. I told her I must return, as I did not want to be late for dinner, having ordered a dish with tomatoes, of which I am very fond, and I did not wish to have it spoilt. She told me not to hurry, as my wife would be sure to be late. I told her I knew better. Ah !’ he said, laughing, ‘elle m'a parlé sentiment, moi je lui ai répondu tomates.’ He was infinitely pleased with himself, and his wife was delighted; but the Princess never let the poor man alone. She was always writing to ask him to go and see her, and giving him commissions to do for her.”

“Truly, she must be a charming person, from your account,” said Sir John; “I vote that we should all decline the honour of her acquaintance; we none of us desire to be made miserable, and I daresay she has, among her receipts for that purpose, something which would apply to the old as well as the young.”

“Your shoe-string is untied, Lady Denzil,” observed Captain Vavasour, who was sitting on the ground at Constance’s feet; “allow me to tie it for you.”

Constance thrust forth her foot, saying,—

“I can never get them to remain tied; they are always coming undone.”

“I will show you how you should tie them,” he replied. “What dainty little shoes!”

Hubert frowned. There was something

free and easy in Captain Vavasour's manner, even more than in his words.

"Do not you find it difficult to get any shoes to fit you, Lady Denzil? Your foot is like a child's."

"I got my shoes here all the same," replied Constance.

Hubert looked at his watch.

"It is half-past five," he observed; "as we dine at seven, we ought to be moving homewards."

"I am going to play another game first," replied his wife. "I am quite rested now, and it will not take long."

"I believe you are longing to beat Miss Annesley and myself once more," cried Allan Barrington, laughing.

"Lady Denzil plays so well, that the

credit is all hers," replied Captain Vavasour. "She is the best lady player I know."

"You are wrong, I assure you," said Constance. "My sister is really a much better and a more certain player than I am, as a rule."

"You had better put off your game till to-morrow, Conty; it is too late to begin now, and I am going home," said Beatrice, rising.

"Oh no!" pleaded Captain Vavasour to Constance. "You promised me one more game. We shall soon dispose of our adversaries. It is not really late."

"Please do not play any more, Conty," said her sister, going up to her, and speaking in a very low voice. Hubert wishes

you to come home ; you will only vex him if you do not."

"Nonsense ! Do you think I intend always to be treated like a baby ?—to be told before all these people what I may do and what I may not ? How Clem and Captain Vavasour would laugh !"

" You are wrong. I hate Captain Vavasour ; he is nothing but a free-and-easy snob. As if his opinion was of any consequence !"

" You are absurd," replied her sister angrily. "Come along," she cried to Captain Vavasour, who was talking at a little distance to Lady Clementina ; "do not let us waste any more time."

Hubert sat with his brows contracted, and his eyes blazing with indignation.

“I am going home,” he said suddenly.

“And I am coming with you,” replied Beatrice. “Are you coming with us, Sir John?”

“No, my dear young lady; I think I shall stay here a little longer, and do myself the pleasure of escorting Lady Denzil home.”

Beatrice gave him a pretty smile of thanks. She felt sure he only stayed because he had an idea it would soothe Hubert’s feelings.

They walked along in silence. The girl felt sure he was very angry. She longed to speak to him, but hardly knew what to say.

“How very kind Sir John is,” she began at last; “it was very good of him to wait for Conty.”

"And much thanks he will get from her for so doing," he answered, savagely. "As long as she has got that idiot, Clem, and a fool like Vavasour to talk and laugh with, much she cares about anyone else's society—or their feelings either, for that matter. I cannot endure that man ; I told Conty so only this morning. He was telling her some most improper stories on subjects which he ought never to have ventured to discuss with her. He is coarse, and his manners to women are detestable ; and he never receives a snub. I have always avoided him in London, I disliked him so much ; and this is the sort of society Conty likes to spend her whole day in. She says Clem is so charming,—such a pleasant companion ; she finds Vavasour so

amusing, and cannot see that it is an insult for a man to talk in the way he does to her. She opens her eyes with a look of astonishment when I explain to her my feelings on the subject ; and even laughed when I told her Vavasour's mind always reminded me of an improper French novel, full of low and degrading thoughts, and flimsily veiled impropriety."

When they reached home, he flung himself on a sofa, wearily saying,—

"I shall leave this place. Do you think the waters or anything else can do me good when she makes my life a misery to me ? What has she done day after day during the last week ? She is always with Clem ; she only gets up early, not to walk with me, but that she may see

more of those whose society she prefers. I tell you she is heartless and selfish. I do not believe she cares a straw for me ; she only married me, I verily believe, because I could give her the things she cares most for ; her husband counts for nothing. There is no use saying anything, Bee," he continued, as Beatrice tried to interrupt the angry flow of words, and say something in extenuation of her sister's conduct. " You know what I say is quite true ; she does not care the snap of a finger for me. If I were ill or dying to-morrow, what would she care ? I do not believe she would give up an hour's amusement to stay with me. No, I tell you !" he cried, his voice trembling with excitement ; " Conty is as

heartless as she is beautiful ; and to think of how I have loved her — of how I do love her ! ”

He turned away to hide the tears which had started to his eyes.

Beatrice watched him with a look of exceeding sorrow. How she longed to comfort him ! But what could she say ? —how assure him that he was mistaken, and that his wife did love him ? She could not bring herself to utter such a falsehood, even to soothe his wounded feelings.

She looked at his slight frame, his delicate, sensitive face, and felt that his was not the nature best fitted to cope with a woman as self-willed as Constance ; she would require a man with a firm, resolute

will, capable of bending her into subjection. Hubert would never do this; he was too keenly sensitive to pain himself, and dreaded paining others. He had lived in a dream from the first, so madly had he loved his idol; otherwise, Beatrice failed to account for his never having awakened to the want of love on her part. She had never understood how he had been able to tolerate the cool friendship which was all that Constance had ever evinced for him from the day she promised to become his wife. That he had often been pained and wounded by her coldness and indifference she well knew, but she had never yet seen him so utterly knocked down as he seemed now.

At that moment her heart rose up in

great anger against her sister. She could not forgive Constance for her want of loyalty and her ingratitude. How could she be so mean ? thought Beatrice indignantly ; and yet at times she had heard Constance declare that she felt the shame and degradation of her conduct.

Beatrice felt bewildered ; she knew not what to say to Hubert, nor, on the other hand, how to influence her sister. She sat mechanically counting the number of times the pattern on the paper of the wall opposite to her was repeated, till she turned away wearied, and feeling that an orange-coloured pattern on a brown ground was a combination of colours she detested.

Hubert had grown calmer.

“ Cannot you speak ? ” he asked ; “ can-

not you tell me what I had better to do, instead of sitting there like a statue?"

"Pray do not think that I do not feel for you, Hubert;—I do, much more than I can possibly tell you; but it is very hard to know what to say. All I think you can do is to try and be patient."

"Much good that would do. If that is all you can suggest, you are quite right in holding your tongue."

"You must know I do not wish to vex you," replied Beatrice, gently. "I am sure you are very unhappy."

"There is no mistake about that."

"Well, granting that Conty is all you say, and that she has behaved very badly to you, she is now your wife; all you can do now is to teach her to love you."

“That is very easy to say; but what can I do more than I have hitherto done? I tell you that she had no right to marry me,” he cried, striking his hand violently on the sofa, “if she did not love me!”

“Very true,” replied Beatrice, with a sigh; “but she has married you, and as far as I can see, your only chance of happiness now is to try and work on her better nature; for Conty is not heartless,—she does feel your goodness, and she has often told me so.”

Beatrice spoke bravely, but a horrible doubt crept into her mind as to whether she was not asserting what she wished to believe, rather than what were her real convictions.

After a short time Constance returned,

looking flushed and tired, and said she should go at once to her room and prepare for dinner.

Hubert prepared to follow her, telling Beatrice he should speak to Conty at once, and tell her what he thought of her conduct.

In a somewhat deprecating manner Beatrice suggested that it might perhaps be better that he should defer doing so till he himself was calmer, but he left the room without answering.

For some minutes she sat listening to the voices raised in anger, which she could hear plainly from the adjoining room.

“Will Conty never grow wiser?” she murmured to herself,—“never learn to see how it must all end, unless she will

show some consideration for Hubert's feelings?"

She strained her attention, hoping to catch some sound to indicate that the storm was abating; but hearing none, she betook herself to her own room to dress for dinner.

The door of her room soon afterwards was flung open violently, and Constance entered, crimson from excitement.

"Hubert is unendurable!" she exclaimed; "he wants me to say I am wrong, but nothing shall induce me to do so. I am not a child, and will not be treated as one."

"We had better not discuss the question at present," answered Beatrice as calmly as she could. "We are late for dinner, and you are not dressed. All I will say

now is, that I think in this case you are wrong, Conty."

" You are hard and unfeeling," replied Constance angrily ; " you always side with Hubert against me."

" I am afraid I am often obliged to do so ; but, as I said before, we can talk over this later, only, as we are going to meet other people, Conty, do try for your own sake as well as Hubert's to control yourself ; and whatever you do, try not to be sulky with him, or the others, you may be sure, will notice it, and draw their own conclusions."





## C H A P T E R I X.

**H**OW late you are!" cried Lady Clementina, as the Denzils, accompanied by Beatrice, arrived fully a quarter of an hour late for dinner. "We were beginning to get quite uneasy about you."

"Yes, I am afraid we are late. I am very sorry;" and a blush rose to Lady Denzil's face as she remembered the reason for their unpunctuality.

"You look rather upset, ma chère,—what is it? Have you been enjoying

summer breezes, which have tended to disturb your equanimity? if so, you are not the only sufferer; other people seem a little put out to-night."

"I am a bright exception, then," observed Madame Arlini; "I do not feel at all cross, so I hope I do not look so."

"Ah! Marchesa, my thoughts were directed more to the superior sex."

"The heat is enough to make anyone cross," remarked Horace Lawleigh.

"And waiting for one's dinner another cause," said Sir John, with a little frown at Beatrice. "However, I promise to forgive you, if you will only make yourself agreeable now you have come."

"How abominable this soup is!" exclaimed Mr Lawleigh, with a look of

disgust ; “ the cook really deserves a blowing-up ; his dinners have been horribly bad the last few days.”

“ Well, administer one to him,” replied his wife. “ I know nobody capable of doing it as well as yourself. Poor Horace !” she continued, in a cheerful voice, and turning to the Marchese Arlini, “ I fear he looks at everything to-day through a pair of dark spectacles.”

“ What is the matter with you, old fellow ?” asked Hubert ; “ are you seedy, or are the waters beginning to disagree with you ?”

“ He is cut up,” replied Lady Clementina, her eyes brimming over with fun ; “ he has received a great blow to-day. Poor dear ! I feel for him, for he is about

to lose the greatest attraction that Homburg contains for him. I grieve to tell you that the most fascinating, agreeable, immaculate—words fail me in enumerating all her charms—Princess Komarom is about to deprive this place of the light of her countenance ; Horace is consequently in despair. Cannot you get up some show of sympathy for him ? ”

Horace Lawleigh ground out something between his teeth that sounded like fool. But his wife went on,—

“ I hear the princess is going to Wiesbaden, Count Bérol having already gone there, and I suppose this mutual devotion is too great to endure a long separation. It is to be hoped that the relations Count Bérol has gone to meet will receive her

with open arms, otherwise she might find herself slightly *de trop* in a family circle. Count Bérol's departure two days ago was rather sudden, and the reason assigned for it very amusing, if true. I am told that the Comtesse Bérol—for there is such a person—had unexpectedly appeared on the scene, having taken up her abode at the Hotel Durmstadt unknown to her husband, and had been a spectator of his devotion to the Princess Komarom, for nearly a week before Count Bérol became aware of her arrival."

"Bosh!" muttered Mr Lawleigh angrily. "You are always ready to believe any folly you hear, however absurd."

"I believe, though, it is true," observed the Marchese. "Anyhow, 'Se non è vero è ben trovato.'"

“How people do talk in this world!” remarked Horace Lawleigh to Madame Arlini, next to whom he was seated, and darting at the same time a wrathful glance at his wife. “They seem to love to hear themselves speak; and it would appear to be, at the same time, a matter of perfect indifference to them what they are saying, provided only they are exercising their tongues. They certainly make use of that member in a way little intended by its Creator.”

“That is true, Mr Lawleigh. I fear we are, many of us, open to that charge. I suppose when people do not talk wisely or well, they often make remarks and observations better avoided; also, it is true that great talkers never acquire

much information, as they never care to listen.”

“No, they never do ; they babble out their ideas till the stream ends in being a poor, little thin dribble. I suppose they entertain themselves, as it seems never to enter into their philosophy to consider whether they are amusing others.”

Lady Clementina’s delicate complexion had assumed a rather deeper shade of pink, but she appeared in no way disconcerted by her husband’s remarks, which were made in a very audible tone ; and she said, in a laughing voice,—

“Ah ! marchesa, how often you will hear people denounce the very sins to which they themselves are most addicted. One sometimes feels disposed to ask oneself

whether their consciences may not have been pricking them. Only a word here and there enlightens one on that point, and one perceives they are far too ignorant of their own failings to have arrived at even a small amount of self-knowledge."

"But, Lady Clementina, I think nothing is more difficult than to know oneself; we are always disposed to judge as we wish to judge, though we try and persuade ourselves we are impartial in our judgment. I am sure that we have a great sympathy for our own faults and failings."

"Quite true," observed Sir John; "and we should never say of another that he is a hypocrite because he preaches what he does not practise. One may have a very real appreciation of certain virtues, and a strong

desire to possess them, and yet be wanting in the stuff which enables us to acquire them."

"I often wonder," said Lady Clementina, "how we should like having our characters drawn for us by our friends and acquaintance. I wonder whether we should recognise ourselves ! However, it would be very amusing."

"I doubt that, my dear lady," replied Sir John ; "a character drawn in such a way would possibly be fairer in some respects, but in many others much more unfair. No, it would never do ; it would be a dangerous game to play at. Why, here we are, a party of nine,—how many of us, do you think, would be on speaking terms with each other to-morrow if we

proceeded to put down our candid opinion on paper one of another?"

"It would be great fun all the same, Sir John."

"What a lot of nonsense people do talk," observed Captain Barrington, in a low voice to Beatrice. "I do not suppose there is a man or woman living who would care to hear the candid opinions of others concerning them, and I should imagine the lady in question the least of all."

"I do not agree with you," replied Beatrice; "I doubt her minding it half as much as some people would do."

"Why so, Miss Annesley?—do you think she is far too hopelessly gone in self-conceit to be likely to be disturbed by what might be an unfavourable opinion of herself?"

“No, I do not mean that, only she always gives me the impression of not caring much what anybody thinks of her.”

“In fact, she would be rather disposed to snap her fingers in their faces,” replied Captain Barrington, laughing. “I think you are about right ; however, if her suggestion was carried out, think in what an awful state of uncharitableness we should be indulging.”

“And yet it might not altogether be a bad thing for us ; it might help us to grow humble, for to be really that, we ought to know ourselves thoroughly.”

“Not at all, I do not believe it would do anything of the kind. We should never be willing to believe in the faults attri-

buted to us by others ; we are apt, I am afraid, to look at our failings through the wrong end of a telescope. No, depend upon it, we should argue and fight over each point."

"I suppose our belief in the truth of the character drawn of us," said Beatrice, "would depend very much on whom it was written by."

"I daresay it would, Miss Annesley. To begin with, it would be a much truer one if written by a real friend."

"I do not think that follows," replied his companion ; "a friend would appreciate our good qualities ; one who did not care for us might be more impartial, and help us to see our faults. You know that liking people very much is apt to

blind one to their faults and failings ; it even leads sometimes to crediting them with virtues they may not possess."

"A person who did not care for you, Miss Annesley, might readily see the faults, but could he equally appreciate the virtues ?—they may never have been revealed to him. I think caring for a person tends to make one critical ; one is inclined to consider carefully whether they act up to the high standard we have raised for them."

"Yes, I suppose that is what one ought to feel about those we love, but when I am very fond of people, I like them just as they are."

"Their faults as well as their virtues ?"

asked Allan Barrington, smiling.

“ Well, I will not go quite so far as that.”

“ I should say, Miss Annesley, that you were naturally very enthusiastic, and always disposed to be very lenient in your judgment of others.”

“ Perhaps so ; but, at any rate, if it is not very wise, it is much more comfortable.”

“ I am afraid I am not very amiable,” observed Allan. “ I do not think I am invariably disposed to take a bright and cheerful view of everybody and everything. Now, I should say that you never suffered from low spirits.”

“ Oh no ! I don't think I ever do,” replied Beatrice, with energy.

“ I do not think you do, my dear,” remarked Sir John, who had overheard

the last words. “ You are just like a bit of fresh, wholesome heather from off your own moors,—a sturdy, staunch little thing. I always feel disposed to call you Heather when I look at you,” he added, as he bent his kindly grey eyes on the bright young face beside him.

“ I often think,” said Captain Barrington, “ that everybody reminds one of some flower.”

“ What is that ? ” cried Lady Clementina ; “ that is a very poetical idea. I wish you would tell me what flower I remind you of.”

“ An azalea, Lady Clementina,” he replied readily,—“ a pale pink, double azalea.”

“ Not a bad selection,” she replied. “ I approve of your choice.”

“Faultless to look at,” whispered Captain Barrington in Beatrice’s ear, “and without any of the delicate scent which makes some flowers so attractive to us.”

“And what is Lady Denzil?” continued Lady Clementina. “Stephanotis?”

“No, that I should select for the Marchesa. Lady Denzil reminds me of a deep red rose.”

“I am jealous! It is my favourite flower?”

“Well, you are all grand garden flowers,” cried Beatrice, “while I am nothing but a humble bit of heather,” and she turned with a little frown towards Sir John.

“And be content, my dear,” he replied; “it is very nice, though perhaps not quite so grand.”

“You see flowers in people, Captain

Barrington?" said Madame Arlini; "I always feel that they remind me of some colour."

"What next?" cried Lady Clementina, laughing. "However, it is amusing, so please go on."

"It sounds stupid, I may say silly," replied the Marchesa, colouring; "but every name is associated with some colour in my mind. The people themselves have nothing to do with it, only their names."

"Well, begin with me. What colour is Clementina?"

"A delicate mauve—a sort of lilac. Carlo is white."

"Anything but a spotless white," whispered Mr Lawleigh in a very low tone to Constance.

“Constance is a pure pale blue,” continued Madame Arlini; “John is a red, rather crimson in shade; Beatrice is black. I do not know your name, Captain Barrington?”

“Allan,” he replied.

“It is a new name to me,” said the Marchesa. “I see no colour attached to it. My own name, Isabella, is an emerald green. I think Mr Lawleigh is called Horace—that is a pale yellow. Hubert is a red brown.”

“What an odd idea seeing colours attached to names; I never heard of anything so funny,” said Lady Clementina. “I hope you are pleased with your colours. I do not like mine, as I detest all mauves or lilacs.”

“ See there, my lady ! ” cried Sir John. “ Why, there goes your own colour ; it is not at all ugly, after all,” and he looked towards a lady who was at that moment advancing up the room, accompanied by two gentlemen, and seated herself at a table not very far from the one where they were sitting. She was a very pretty woman, about twenty years of age, with masses of bright golden hair, and she was dressed entirely in mauve.

“ Who is she ? ” asked the Marchese Arlini.

“ I have not seen her before.”

“ I can tell you all about her,” replied Horace Lawleigh. “ I heard her history this afternoon ; she seems to be rather a remarkable personage.”

"Trust Horace for that," observed Lady Clementina, lowering her voice to the marchese. "Before he has been twenty-four hours in the same place with anybody worth looking at, he is sure to have found all there is to know about them, and what he cannot find out he will probably invent for our edification."

"She is a Mrs Balfour," continued Mr Lawleigh, "and is twenty-three years of age; some say she is an American, others that she is Irish; not having heard her speak I can give no opinion as to which is correct; probably she is half-and-half. She is a widow, and about to take unto herself a second husband; the man with the black beard is, I believe, the happy individual. She is lovely to look at,

and would give you the impression of being as gentle as a dove ; would she not, Marchese ? ”

The latter had kept his eyes fixed on the lady in question ever since her entrance.

“ I am told, however,” said Mr Lawleigh, that her sweetness and gentleness is all on the outside. Her temper is said to be something beyond description. Her first husband was enormously rich, and a mere boy, not more than twenty-one when she married him, and in a consumption at the time ; she led the poor fellow such a life, that in a fit of despair he one day shot himself. Do not you think the individual who proposes to play the rôle of husband number two must be a bold man ? He has all the appearance

of being a fool, whatever he may really be, which, perhaps, accounts for his present position."

"Ah!" said Sir John, after having taken a leisurely survey of the group, "to look at that man you might think he was a complete fool; but he is not, there's vice in him."

"I wonder how you contrive to pick up so much information about people in so short a time, Horace," observed Hubert Denzil; "it is probably more than half of it untrue, and then you ought to feel sorry that you have been the means of spreading false reports."

"Mr Lawleigh reminds me of the Athenians of old, of whom it was said they always wanted to hear and tell of some

new thing," said Madame Arlini to Allan Barrington.

"I suppose I am very wicked," said Mr Lawleigh; "but I confess when I hear a bad story of anybody, my natural inclination is always to believe it."

"Well, I should not advise you to boast of that sentiment," replied Hubert, dryly; "and now, if we intend hearing any music to-night, I should say we had better be moving."





## CHAPTER X.

ONE Sunday afternoon Beatrice wandered out into the gardens close to their apartments. Constance had fallen asleep, and Hubert was reading, so she sallied forth, armed with a book of sermons. She had been sitting on a bench for about half-an-hour, and had scarcely begun to read when the sound of approaching footsteps caused her to look up, and she saw Madame Arlini advancing towards her.

“ You are reading, Miss Annesley ?

Will you think me intrusive if I join you?"

Beatrice looked at the speaker, and thought her looking sadder and paler than usual, and she noticed recent traces of tears in the large, melancholy eyes.

"Not at all, I shall be very glad if you will come and sit here with me. I came out, fancying it would be cooler; it's so very hot and oppressive to-day."

"What are you reading?" asked the Marchesa, laying her hand on the book which was open on the girl's knees.  
"Ah! I see—a sermon. I wish my knowledge of English enabled me to read more easily books in your language, for I should like to read some of the sermons written by the great men of your church."

“But you speak it so well, surely you can read it also.”

“I can speak it more easily than I can read it, though. I learnt it so much from ear.”

“I should have thought you would hardly care to read sermons written by any of our clergy—in fact, I imagined you would not have considered it right to do so,” replied Beatrice doubtfully.

“I know it would not be approved of,” said the Marchesa, laughing; “but I trouble myself little about that. I fear I have not as deep a respect for what my priest tells me as I ought to have, and that I am what you would call rather free thinking; indeed, I am very far from doing all or even one-half of what my

confessor directs I should do ; it is very shocking, is it not ? ”

“ That depends,” replied Beatrice ; “ I can hardly be a judge on such a subject.”

“ You are so different in your church, Miss Annesley, you can hardly understand our position,—you have so much liberty ; to us, that is denied, so I take it. Of course I am wrong, but I cannot say that I feel sorry.”

“ Your position seems to me very strange. Perhaps, as I really know so little about it, it would be almost an impertinence for me to speak of it.”

“ Not at all ; I like to hear what you think.”

“ As far as I can understand you,” replied Beatrice, “ you consider yourself bound to obey your priest in all matters

connected with religion. He is to be your guide, your mentor,—I might almost say your conscience. You know that you ought to submit your judgment wholly and entirely to his. But you do not do this; you cannot help thinking for yourself. And if this is so, how can you be a sincere member of your church?"

" You are quite right. That is the position that our priests arrogate to themselves; and it is quite true that many people cannot resist the desire of thinking for themselves. I am one of those unhappy people."

" Why do you say unhappy? There is something very natural and human in so doing, and as reason is given to you, surely you are bound to make use of it."

“Natural and human it may be, but not according to the views of our priesthood. They would consider it decidedly inconvenient; but what was the subject of your reading? Ah, I see,—the efficacy of prayer. Do you believe in that, Miss Annesley?”

“I should be very sorry for myself if I did not,” replied Beatrice, shortly.

“But do you really believe that the Almighty, being omniscient, having ordained our lives, our ends, beforehand, can be influenced by petitions offered to Him by creatures like ourselves?—can such a thing be possible?”

“I cannot argue about it, and if I could I should still prefer not doing so. All I can say is, that we are told to pray without ceasing. We have read that “the effectual

fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' When St Peter was in prison, all day and all night prayers were offered for him. It seems to be one of the strongest instincts in our nature to pray. It is the greatest comfort to do so, and to feel that we may ask for what we want."

"I wish I felt as you do. I agree with you that our instinct leads us to pray. But when I begin to think about it, doubts will creep into my mind. Besides, we may pray often and earnestly; but our prayers are not answered."

Beatrice turned towards her companion at the last words, which were spoken in a sad, almost despairing voice, and saw that the tears had gathered in the Marchesa's eyes.

“ I am so sorry for you,” she said, in a low tone; “ but we must not expect our prayers to be answered at once. You may have prayed often ; but it may not have been in the right way, or you may have asked for things that God has seen fit to deny you. He knows what is best for us ; besides, it is not for us to decide where and how our prayers shall be answered. It may be a long time before we see them fulfilled. All we can do is to trust, to try and be patient. Please forgive my speaking in such a way to you. It seems almost a liberty to take ; but you make me feel so sorry.”

“ Ah ! you may well be sorry ; for I seem to have nothing left me. Since the day I began to think, I have lost all my faith. I

don't say I ever had much ; but now I have nothing."

"Have you nobody to whom you could speak on these subjects ; no good, honest, sensible man ?"

"Nobody," cried the Marchesa, passionately. "I am sick of them all. They would tell me I have brought it on myself by reading and inquiring into subjects on which I have been forbidden to question ; that I have refused to follow blindly all they have desired me to believe. I am not prepared to leave my church ; nor do I wish to become a member of yours. I cannot be an atheist, for I still believe in God ; but I abhor many of the doctrines I ought to hold as a good Catholic,—the infallibility of the Pope, the dogma of the Immaculate

Conception, disgust me. They appear to me ridiculous. I have not the comfort so many have in confession, because, though I believe it is good to humble oneself and confess one's evil thoughts and deeds, I do not believe in the absolution given to me by the priest. My common sense tells me that, unless I truly and earnestly repent of my sins, his absolution is worthless ; it is merely a farce. No ; all that I believed in from my childhood is slipping away from me."

"But what has made you feel like this ?" asked Beatrice, a great pity stealing over her as she watched the sad face of the speaker. "I know you are older than I am, but still you are too young to become hard."

"I am eight years older than you," replied the marchesa; "but in feelings I might be your senior by twenty years. I feel so old sometimes, and as if I had done with old happiness; and now the last thing left me, my religion, is leaving me too."

"Not entirely, for you believe in God, and you really feel that all trials and sorrows are sent by Him; trials, I am sure, of our faith and our love. You can still hope and wait, being sure that sooner or later the daylight will come."

"No, I cannot; that is exactly what I cannot do, I cannot be patient; I cannot be resigned. Sometimes I feel so wicked that, horrible as it sounds, I should be contented to believe in nothing, either

good or holy. I would almost be content to be bad, but I cannot, for it disgusts me. I feel I am wrong in speaking in such a way to a girl of your age, but you are so *sympathique* to me; with all your brightness and happiness, you have so much power of feeling for others, that I forget myself. All that I can tell you is that I am a very miserable woman."

"Dear Marchesa," and Beatrice stole her hand gently into that of her companion, "I am so very, very sorry. I wish I could be any real help or comfort to you. Though I am very happy myself, I can feel very deeply for those who are not, and all the more because I love happiness so dearly myself."

"I came out this afternoon to get away

from myself," continued Madame Arlini. "Perhaps it was not accident which led me to choose this path, as it brought me to you. I came out with my heart bursting, with the last words my husband had spoken to me ringing in my ears. He told me what he has told me a hundred times, only I am weak enough always to smart under it. He declared he hated me,—that I stood between him and what he cared for most in life."

"How wicked of him," cried Beatrice, indignantly; "but why did your husband marry you if he did not love you?"

"He married me for my fortune and my position."

"But you are beautiful; does he not

care for that, and for your cleverness ? He should have heard the admiration Sir John and my brother-in-law were expressing for you last night."

"In our country, marriages are made more often than not because they are convenient and desirable. My uncle, who loves me dearly, thought he had secured my happiness and a good husband, for Arlini's family is one of the best in Italy ; it suited my uncle also for political reasons. I was nothing," she added, bitterly, "a mere chattel, as you say, a necessary part of the compact between the two families. Carlo was in love with a cousin of his, and I believe he could have procured a dispensation to enable him to marry her, but his father would not hear of it ; he

has never forgiven me, however, for being the innocent cause of dividing him from his cousin. I had only left the convent where I had been educated about a month, when I first saw Carlo, for the marriage had been already arranged, and I loved him from the first."

"Oh! how sad," murmured Beatrice; "fancy being married without having a voice in the matter."

"It is not unusual, as I tell you, with us, and I should not have complained had my husband only loved me. Many such marriages turn out well, and mine would have done so had it not been for that woman, his cousin. She is a fiend, I tell you, for she is married now herself, but she has taken my husband from me, and

keeps him as a very slave at her feet. He has eyes, ears, for none but her."

"How horrible! When he had married another, it seems quite impossible to believe in such wickedness," cried Beatrice, aghast at what she heard; "was not your uncle very unhappy when he found out how miserable you were?"

"Yes, he was very much grieved. I told him I was wretched,—that my life was a burden to me. He spoke to me very seriously and very kindly. He said I was young, and my life was still before me to make or to mar. Three courses were open to me. I could live the life so many women in the same station and position as myself, lived. I could throw myself entirely into society; try and drown my thoughts in a vortex

of gaiety ; flirt, and console myself with the affection of some other man."

"But you were married !" exclaimed Beatrice, her eyes opening wide with horror ; "how could he think such a thing possible ?"

"Dear child, I am wrong, I fear, in speaking to you as I am doing ; you are still so young and so pure-minded ; sufficient that it is possible and an every-day occurrence ; but to go on. He said I might also throw myself into religion and become a *dévote*, or I might again give myself up to cultivating my mind by reading, to educate myself in a way I had never done hitherto. I might take an interest in politics and the literature of the day. Politics, you must know, are, in my uncle's

eyes, the most absorbing of all topics, which, when you remember his position, you will easily understand.

“Neither of the first courses he considered likely to be attractive to me :—a mere life of sin and pleasure he felt sure would infallibly weary and disgust me ; nor did he consider I was likely to find happiness in the life of a *dévote*. The last course was the one he advised me to pursue. I reflected, and followed his advice. Whatever faults I may have committed in my life, nobody can ever say a word against my good name. But though I have found interest and amusement in reading, I am not happy or resigned to my life. Strange as it may seem to you, knowing that my husband had no love for me, I have never

been able to grow quite indifferent to him. I have always loved him, and I heartily despise myself for it."

"Please do not say that, you have no right to do so. You may be sure, sooner or later, you will receive your reward, and your husband will one day appreciate you as you deserve."

"He has shown no signs of it during the eight years I have been his wife. I have never forgotten his words, when I first told him I hoped before long to become a mother: he answered that he was perfectly indifferent as to whether I had a child or not."

"How brutal!" cried Beatrice.

"Yes, it was brutal. Had he struck me a blow I should have felt it less, for I

had so hoped it would have changed his feelings towards me. But now it is too late ; he will never change."

"Never is a long day," replied Beatrice ; "please God, there may be some bright and sunny days yet before you ; will you forgive me if I venture to say something which has come into my mind ?"

"Pray, do not hesitate to do so. I liked you from the first moment I saw you. I felt sure you were good and true."

"What I feel is this : throwing yourself heart and soul into intellectual pursuits is no doubt a very good thing, and makes your mind stronger, but it will never alone make you happy ; indeed, you say yourself that it has not done so. Hard as it may be, you must try and turn to

something higher and better ; you must try and make yourself feel your trials and sorrows are sent by God. He gives happiness where He will, and withholds it from others ; your happiness, some day (even if it should never be here below) will be higher and greater than that of those who have never known sorrows or crosses. If He has selected this particular cross for you, it must be because it is the best, —the very one most necessary for you. He may see fit to reward you soon, but for certain, He will reward you later."

"But how can I make myself feel this ? I cannot spend my life in going to church or in repeating prayers. I have tried and have failed ; besides, as I told you

I have ceased to believe in the efficacy of prayer.

“Do not admit that even to yourself. By saying it often, you will end in believing it to be true. I do not think you really believe what you say at present; you are unhappy and doubtful, but that is, I am sure, all. I beg your pardon for speaking as I am doing,” continued Beatrice, humbly. “I have had no crosses or trials to speak of, only just enough to make me feel thankful for all the good that is given to me. I only say this because in such a sad life as yours there is nothing else to do. You are not angry with me, are you?”

“Angry, child! I do not know why I speak to you at all, for I am naturally

very reserved. I felt wild, mad, when I came out this afternoon; but when I saw you sitting here, looking so peaceful and happy, my heart opened out to you."

"I am very glad it did," answered Beatrice, brightly. "It is good sometimes to speak of one's troubles."

"You have a great power of sympathy, Miss Annesley. I quite forget, when I am talking to you, how young you are, and how little able to enter into my troubles."

"I do not think it is necessary to have felt a thing oneself to enable one to sympathise with others. One can always recognise real suffering wherever one meets it; and I cannot understand one's sympathies not being awakened by that."

“ You have a healthy, happy mind. It makes me feel quite envious. I only hope that nothing may happen to crush the brightness out of your life.”

“ There is the bell beginning for our evening service,” observed Beatrice. “ Why do not you come with me ? ”

“ I wonder what Padre Lorenzo would say to my attending the services in your church. However, I believe he thinks I am past praying for. I do not think I will come, not because of his possible disapprobation, but because I do not feel in the mood to go to church. As I tell you, I came out feeling hard and bitter beyond words ; I longed to be revenged on my husband. Do not be shocked at me ; but I cannot tell you how I long to hurt him sometimes, to

make him feel something of what he has caused me to suffer."

"Try and be soft, though," pleaded Beatrice. "I have read somewhere, though I do not remember where, 'a revengeful spirit is of the devil himself.' You are miserable when you feel revengeful; and should you be really happier if your revenge was satisfied?"

"I should like to know, Miss Annesley, how you, who believe in the efficacy of prayer, and in God's justice and mercy, can explain how it is that so many are allowed to suffer from no sins of their own."

"I cannot explain it. It is a mystery, and requires all our faith to believe it is right. I only know and believe it must be

right. I suppose some characters and natures require different trials. It has been said, you know, that prosperity, in some cases, discovers and nurses our vices, while adversity has the effect of discovering and bringing to the light of day our virtues. Perhaps that is now your case. You may now be developing virtues which would never have been called forth had you been really happy and prosperous. However, I ought to be going now."

"We shall meet to-night, probably, at the Kursaal," observed Madame Arlini.

"We shall not dine till half-past seven, as it will be late before the service is over," replied Beatrice.

"Well, if I do not see you again to-day, good-bye, Miss Annesley, and thank you."

"I wish you would not call me Miss Annesley. Nobody does."

"Yours is a beautiful name, Beatrice," said the marchesa in Italian; "but I do not think it suits you. It is a name with sad associations to me."

"Then call me Bee, as all who love me do," cried the girl, in a ringing, merry voice.

"Yes, I will. That is bright and joyous,—full of life and business, just like yourself. So now, good-bye, dear little Bee. I can quite believe of you that you gather honey all the live long day."





## CHAPTER XI.

**A**TACIT reconciliation had taken place between Constance and her husband. Beatrice had done her utmost to persuade her sister that she was bound to show more deference to Hubert's wishes ; but she knew that she had not succeeded in convincing Constance that she was really in the wrong. All her arguments were met by the same complaint, that Hubert was unreasonable, and that, were she to consent to being constantly with him, the result would only be

that the weariness she felt in his society would increase.

The encouragement Constance gave to Captain Vavasour, who was always hovering about her, and paying her the most extravagant compliments, was a great source of annoyance to Hubert, and one in which Beatrice fully sympathised. Constance, when spoken to by her sister on the subject, only laughed, and declared that if Hubert intended to be jealous of every man who showed her any attention, he had better shut himself up, as nothing made a man so ridiculous as an exhibition of jealousy.

“Clem says there is no harm in anything I do, and she knows much more of the world than either you or Hubert.”

"Putting aside the utter want of delicacy on your part in discussing the subject with Lady Clementina, and letting her see that, after having been married for so short a time, you have already contrived to have a difference of opinion with Hubert, and on such a subject, too," said Beatrice, with a look of disgust, "I am quite convinced how right Hubert was when he told you that he did not wish Lady Clementina should become a very intimate friend of yours. I quite understand that you think her right and sensible, seeing she agrees with all you say or do."

"Well, Captain Vavasour is always amusing. He has plenty to say for himself, and does not sit dull or silent for an hour at a time, like Hubert does."

“ Oh yes. I grant you there is a superfluity of words about Captain Vavasour, but a very great scarcity of ideas, I imagine. I tell you, Conty, you are wrong—wholly wrong ; and what is wrong is always wrong. No good ever comes out of it.”

“ It is impossible for me only to care for the people Hubert likes ; in fact, I often think that I more frequently dislike people I meet than the reverse.”

“ That is possible,” replied Beatrice, musingly ; “ but I am not sure that, on the whole, it is a bad thing for us. Some people may be antipathetic to us, but they are of use because they remind one of the stones in an arch which serve to keep each other in their proper places.”

Constance stared at her sister, and said,—

“I do not understand what you mean ; however, here comes Marie Basileff, so we cannot discuss your queer ideas any further.”

Beatrice sighed ; it was the general way in which all her conversations with her sister ended.

“I have come to fetch you on my way to the tennis ground ; and, as it is still early, I thought we might have a little music first,” cried the Russian girl, as she entered the room.

“I am sorry that I shall not be able to stay and listen to your playing,” replied Constance ; “but my husband is sitting in the garden with Sir John, and waiting for me to go with him to return some visits. However, Bee will be delighted to stay and listen to you.”

Marie Basileff kissed the tips of her fingers to Lady Denzil as she left the room, and then turning to Beatrice, said,—

“How nice this is; I shall have you all to myself, and I will play to you as long as you like, while you shall sit here and eat these chocolate bon-bons I have brought you,”—and seating herself at the piano, the young girl began playing a mazurka of Chopins’s.

Beatrice was enchanted as the little princess wandered from one thing to another—some gay, some sad. Her whole face seemed changed—spiritualised, Beatrice thought.

“How you must love music!” she said at last.

“Ah! do I not? from the bottom of

my heart. When I play I seem no longer my own self, but quite another self. I am sure I could express my feelings better in music than in words."

Both girls were startled when the clock on the chimney-piece struck four.

"I had no idea it was so late," cried Beatrice; "I could sit and listen to you for ever, Marie."

"Yes, but we must go. They will be waiting for us, and Sophie will wonder what mischief I have got into; so come along." As they proceeded through the garden, Marie exclaimed,—"There is Sophie walking with Mr Lawleigh; depend upon it they are discussing books as usual. I verily believe Sophie reads every book that is written; and, as Mr Lawleigh reads a great deal, I fancy that is the reason

she likes him, so that she may talk them over with him. Sophie is very clever, you know, Bee, and likes clever people. Mr Lawleigh is clever, but I think he is so ill-natured ; whenever I am in his company, and am leaving the room, I always feel disposed to make him a little curtsey, and to say : Be merciful. However, though Sophie is so clever, it does not make her happy.”

“ Is she not happy ? ” asked Beatrice, with interest ; “ she is so beautiful, but her face is very sad at times, I have thought.”

“ Yes, she often looks sad ; for one thing, she is not happy about Constantine Orisky.”

“ Who is he ? ” said Beatrice.

“ A cousin of ours ; he wants to marry

Sophie ; he is very rich and of a very good family. Papa and mamma want her to marry him."

" Does not she care about him ? "

" Oh yes ! but you see Sophie has strange views. She lived at one time a great deal with an old aunt of my father's, who is a very religious woman, and she has imbibed some of my aunt's peculiar opinions, and one of them is that you ought not to marry a man whose religious views do not agree with your own. Sophie says Constantine believes in nothing, and she has heard several stories about the life he leads, which have shocked her ; and she declares she will never marry a man she cannot respect."

" Then I can quite understand her being unhappy," replied Beatrice, slowly. " I am

sure, if one loved a man, and could not approve of him, it would be horribly sad."

"But, my dear Bee, one cannot have everything."

"Yes, but, Marie, there are some things which are far more important in a husband than either riches or family."

"They are very good, though, in their way ; and Sophie is the last person to be indifferent to them. She is very proud and very 'difficile,' as the French say. However, though she loves Constantine, they have quarrelled. She cries often about it, but she never speaks of it."

"Poor Sophie!" said Beatrice. "I do feel for her."

"But she never tells a soul what she feels. If she suffers, she keeps it to herself, and it eats into her heart. What is

the use of the doctor sending her here to drink the waters, when she makes herself ill by her obstinacy?"

"Hush, Marie! You should not speak in such a heartless way of your sister; she is so right to feel as she does."

"Right! I say she is wrong—quite wrong; she is making my father and mother angry, and she is throwing away a splendid marriage. Why cannot she marry Constantine, and convert him afterwards?"

"That would be beginning at the wrong end," replied Beatrice, gravely. "I think there are some points it is indispensable that a husband and wife should agree on."

"She had better not marry a Russian, then," answered Marie, laughing; "there are very few Darby and Joan couples

among those I know. I am sorry for Sophie, and I love her dearly, but I cannot see with her eyes ; and really, considering how tiresome mamma is, and what a trial her temper is to all about her, I wonder Sophie is not willing to get away from her."

"Oh, Marie ! how can you speak in such a way of your mother. It is quite horrible!"

"I daresay it sounds so. I love mamma in my own way, only her temper is an impossible one to live with. That is one reason, you know, why my father is so little with us ; her caprices have quite worn out his patience."

Beatrice felt shocked ; there was something quite repulsive to her in the way her companion spoke. She had taken a

great liking to the merry - hearted little girl, and the Princess Basileff had always seemed to her such a courteous, well-bred woman, though there was something in the dark eyes and thinly-cut lips which might suggest to a close observer that their owner possessed a somewhat violent temper.

Her reflections were interrupted by Marie, who said,—

“Whatever you do, be sure to say nothing to Sophie of what I have told you, — she would be so angry with me. She is coming towards us now, and there are Sir John and Captain Barrington.”

“We were wondering what had become of you two young ladies,” said Sir John.

“Marie has been playing to me, and I

enjoyed it so much that we quite forgot it was growing late."

They found Mr Lawleigh already sitting on a bench, with some chairs placed beside it.

"Have you made the necessary arrangements for an expedition over to Frankfort to-morrow?" asked Sir John; "and by what train are we to start?"

"You have a choice of two," replied Mr Lawleigh — "one at twelve and the other at four-thirty. I propose going by the last; those who are minded to do some sight-seeing had better go by the first."

"I have no wish to do any sight-seeing," replied Sir John. "The weather is far too hot, and the sights are well known to me. What say you, Miss Bee?"

“We stayed at Frankfort on our way here, so I feel sure we shall go by the later train.”

“I have ordered the dinner,” said Mr Lawleigh. “How about our numbers? As far as I know, they stand thus: Lord and Lady Denzil and Miss Annesley, three; ourselves, five; you and Barrington, seven; the Arlinis, nine; Princess Sophie and her sister, eleven; Wilmington, twelve; and Vavasour, thirteen. We must find a fourteenth.”

“I did not know Captain Vavasour was to be of the party,” remarked Sir John.

“My wife and Lady Denzil asked him this morning.”

“How idiotic of Conty!” said Beatrice to herself.

“I have to thank you for the book

you were kind enough to send me, Princess," said Mr Lawleigh, turning towards Sophie Basileff, who was sitting beside him.  
"I have nearly read it through."

"And you like it?" she asked.

"I agree with most of the writer's views, but the subject is a painful one."

"I quite expected, Mr Lawleigh, that you would sympathise with Monsieur M.'s views; the only people who would not do so, I should think, would be priests or women."

"And I am devoutly thankful that I am neither the one nor the other; at any rate the former."

"Pray, do not apologise; but I do not see why you should be devout about it. You have reason to be thankful that you are not a woman. Men have the best of everything in this world," she continued

bitterly, “ and are not half thankful enough for their advantages.”

“ But what should we do without you, Princess ? A man is not a man who does not feel all he owes to women. Now, do not look at me in that way as if I were merely a block of stone ; it hurts my feelings. Do you think I am not sensible of the many charms, I may say of the superiority, in some ways, of your sex over ours ? ”

“ But you men never do your best to help us, or at least rarely ; you do nothing to feed our minds (I suppose you admit we have minds) ; for our bodies I daresay you would sacrifice much. If we are silly, gossiping, frivolous, can you be surprised ? How do you treat us ? Do you ever speak to us as if we were on an equality with you ? What is your conversation but a

graceful condescension to our intellects, or rather to what you consider them to be. The last new novel, the latest scandal,—do you ever dream that we may care to hear of something more interesting, and that when we are doomed perpetually to listen to such *conversation*, we may feel ready to die of ennui? Everything that is best in life is destined to fall to the lot of man; he has always a sphere for the development of his talents, his ambition, his inclination; but women are doomed to remain at home, to dream, to think, and to complain!"

"Excuse me; but I entirely disagree with you. Men do not think so lightly of the intellect of women. If a woman has brains, and a taste for conversation above the type you are amiable enough to suggest that we consider most suited to be addressed

to her, surely she can find means of developing these gifts. Ah ! Princess, trust me ; you women (I speak collectively) are yourselves to blame for the position you hold, or imagine yourselves to hold, in the estimation of men ; besides, it is incontestable that men do recognise in women fine qualities and have the greatest respect for them."

"Please to name some of them to me," she replied, with a scornful smile.

"The heart is the great organ in a woman's moral nature ; it governs everything. Her mind is subordinate to it ; there can be no doubt that your hearts are much larger than ours."

"That only proves woman to be foolish and unreasoning ; the heart is the seat of affection, not of reason ; having a large

heart shows we can bestow much love on others, and, that being involuntary, I do not see how it can be called a fine quality ; and it is a sad reflection that those least capable of loving have often the power of commanding most love, so I do not see that we gain much by having large hearts."

" It is an estimable quality all the same."

" Particularly, Mr Lawleigh, as it is a quality so advantageous to your sex."

" Then, again, Princess, women have a great power of sympathy ; that is a great charm in our eyes. Nothing makes a person so popular as being very sympathetic ; be the sympathy for our joys, our sorrows, or our sins, all is grateful to us."

" It strikes me, Mr Lawleigh, that what you most admire in women is from an entirely selfish point of view. All the qua-

lities you appreciate most are those which conduce to your own advantage and comfort ; you seem quite to forget that none of those qualities are likely to make us happier or more contented."

" You are hasty ; I consider the power of being able to love much and deeply, brings a blessing with it, even more on those who love than those who are loved. Love, from its very unselfishness, raises your nature ; women, when they love, absorb themselves completely in their love ; they will sacrifice so much, they are willing to sink their own interests, their very identity, in the love they bestow on another. You see it in the love a woman feels for her child or for the man to whom she has given her heart."

" Yes, it is true : a woman's nature is to

give all, a man's is to take. The comparison does not sound well for your sex, Mr Law-leigh ; it may be a proof of your superior strength of character, but it does little credit to the nobleness of your disposition ; and what a melancholy thought that this very love, so freely given, often inspires in you nothing but a desire to take the gift, and no inclination to emulate the spirit of the donor."

"I have told you, Princess, that I consider women have great qualities, and you are hardly just in your remarks. People are often very sweeping in their censure ; to hear you speak, one would think a man is incapable of true love. *You* surely are the last person justified in making such an assertion. I do not say that a man's love is ever perhaps quite as unselfish as a woman's, but it may be a very deep and

true one all the same. Men's whole lives have in some instances been made or marred by the influence of a woman they have loved."

" And who were the women who in many cases have so influenced them ? " asked Sophie Basileff quickly :—“ ‘ marred ’ their lives, as you express it ? Do you think it commands our respect, raises our opinion of a man, when we see how he allows himself to be swayed, governed, to commit crimes even, owing to his infatuation for a worthless woman ? Do you consider that is a proof that he is capable of a great or true love ? Bah ! It is nothing but a subjection of his reason to his senses ; love has nothing to do with it. A man, when he wishes to make his love a blessing to a woman, must know how to govern and

influence her mind. You think enough of her other charms, but that she has a mind you seldom take into consideration ; and can you wonder, then, that the influence she obtains over you by these charms is often used unworthily ? ”

“ I take it, the influence of some men’s minds would be an uncommonly doubtful blessing to a woman,” replied Mr Law-leigh.

“ That is of course ; but if a woman allows herself to be influenced unworthily, the sin is on her own head,” answered the Princess, turning away her head and sighing. “ But I fear,” she continued, “ that women are too easily influenced where their feelings are concerned ; a woman, almost without knowing it herself, catches something of the man’s turn of mind—his way

of looking at things ; she becomes almost his second self."

" Yes, Princess, undoubtedly it is the nature of man to lead, and woman to follow. A true woman has always an instinct which induces her to lean on a man :— in plain English, to like to be governed."

" What are they discussing there ? " exclaimed Marie Basileff. " Love ! That is very interesting ; but we should none of us agree about that, Sophie and I least of all. She is a ' visionaire.' She wishes and desires the impossible, which is very uncomfortable. She says I am too impressible," continued the girl, laughing heartily, " to have a lasting impression about anything. I believe she thinks I am just like a butterfly, but I don't mind. I find it very

agreeable. Butterflies have a good time of it ; they go everywhere, and see lots of fun. Sophie reads a great deal,—half the night, I believe ; she thinks a great deal ; and she looks often ‘triste ;’ that is not amusing. What are you working so hard for ?” she broke off in her abrupt way, turning to Beatrice,—

“ Are you making socks ? Who are they for ? ”

“ Yes, they are socks. I make a good many for the poor people in our old Yorkshire home. These are for a small boy, by name Tommy Hobbs, a great friend of mine. I cannot help laughing when I think of him, and of the funny way he behaved at his baptism.”

“ At his baptism ! What do you mean, Bee ? What could a baby do

at that time, except yell and scream at having his Satanic Majesty cast out of him?"

"He was not a baby, as it happens," replied Bee. "He was four years old. His parents had never chosen to have him baptised, and our rector had to use all his persuasion to induce them at last to have it done. When the time came for having the water poured over his head and the sign of the Cross made, he was led up to our rector, who laid his hand on Tommy's shoulder, but he broke away from him and ran round the font. In despair Mr Ashton dashed the water in his face, when Tommy stopped abruptly, and asked in a tone of comic wrath,—'Wilt ee be quiet? Who melled with thee?'"

"What a lovely story," cried Marie.

“How charming English children must be, so sharp and original.”

“No, my dear young lady,” remarked Sir John. “Not all English children:—that is the speciality of the Yorkshire folk. Is it not, Miss Bee ?”

“I do not think there are any better,” replied Bee stoutly. “And there is no doubt they are very quaint. I remember when our governess was one day teaching at the Sunday school, she asked a child, who it was who tempted her to tell lies and be disobedient. The child considered for a minute, and then replied, ‘Mr Henry.’ ‘Who?’ said Miss Leigh, in a tone of astonishment. No answer; so she repeated the question. An older girl got up and said, ‘Please, teacher, she means ould Harry.’”

“ How I should like to go to Yorkshire, Bee ! I think you might ask me to go and stay with you some day.”

“ We have left Redsands now, and are living in London, I am sorry to say ; no place will ever be to me like our old home.”

“ Tell me about it, please. Did you do any other amusing things besides teaching funny children ? ”

“ There is not much to tell, but it was a very happy life ; particularly when my brother was at home.”

“ I suppose you are very fond of your brother.”

“ Rather,” replied Beatrice, much amused. “ My life was a very different one from yours, I expect,” said the little princess ; “ for we have never lived much in the country.

Sometimes we have stayed at a place my father has near Moscow. My brothers always teased me, and were not at all nice to me. We had two governesses—a French one and an English one; and I hated them both, especially the French one. Sometimes we used to ride with our old coachman, who had lived with my father before he was married, and that I liked better than anything. He was such a funny old fellow, a Tartar, and one of his habits was to drink seventy cups of tea daily."

"My dear young lady," cried Sir John, "I feel disposed to say, in the words of Dr Johnson, 'Let even your fiction be supported by probability.'"

"It is true, I assure you, Sir John; "he was quite an original; and, one day,

I remember our cook, a Moscow woman, and a dissenter (she only cooked for the servants; our French cook had nothing to do with them), coming to my mother to say that, for the future, she must decline having anything more to do with old Ivan's cooking; 'for,' said she, 'the obstinate old brute will eat horse-flesh; and when I put it into the pot to boil, it hisses and jumps about so that I know it must be possessed by the devil.' But we have never lived much in Russia, for my mother's health cannot stand the climate. We have been a great deal in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, as well as in Paris."

"And I suppose you speak every language under the sun," suggested Captain Barrington.

"I will not have you laugh at me," re-

plied Marie, with a pout ; “though I am not very big, I am not a child ; I was seventeen on my last birthday.”

“Pray, do not suppose I meant to do anything half so impertinent,” replied Captain Barrington humbly.

“I hated always to be small ; they used to laugh at me, and say I should be a dwarf ; I was so jealous of Sophie’s being tall. I remember once, after my English nurse had dressed me in a fine frock to go down to the drawing-room, getting hold of a pot of cold cream. I knew pomatum was supposed to make one’s hair grow ; so I thought the cold cream might have the same effect on my arms and legs. What a scolding I got !”

“Look ! there is Lady Clementina waving her hand to us. I suppose she intends

giving us some tea," observed Sir John.  
" We had better be moving."

" And after tea we must have some lawn tennis," cried Marie ; " I am simply longing to beat somebody."

" Who is that little pygmy of a girl talking to my wife ?" asked Mr Lawleigh of the Princess Sophie.

" Not to know her is an ignorance I am surprised at meeting in you, Mr Lawleigh. She is Mademoiselle Jacobi, the daughter of the great banker."

" Ah ! I see : Jewish all over, from the style of her costume to her earrings. Seeing she is Jacobi's daughter, of course those enormous diamonds are real ! "

" They say she will have two hundred thousand pounds the day she is married," observed Sophie Basileff ; " that will com-

pensate even for being a pigmy of a girl, will it not?"

"Yes, if one could only shut her up afterwards, or ignore her. I daresay somebody would be found to take her on those terms."

"There are men brutes enough to do that, I make no doubt, Mr Lawleigh."

"I suppose, Princess, you think that even I myself might be capable of that."

"I was not thinking of you at all; but if you ask me, I should say I do not know. The impression you leave on my mind is of being neither good nor wicked. Perhaps, if you tried being either, you might attain to the greatest degree of perfection in the latter."

"I am not ambitious, therefore I shall not strive after perfection in either quality.

A little ambition has its advantages ; too much is the ruin of our tranquillity and happiness. But let me remind you of one thing, and that is : when we do not esteem people, we are apt to fall into the error of despising them even more than they deserve."

"I object to having words put into my mouth, Mr Lawleigh. I never said one word about despising you. If I did do so, I should not express my feeling, for nobody tolerates being despised, and I do not fancy you would be very pleasant as an enemy."

"Mademoiselle Jacobi, let me introduce my husband to you," said Lady Clementina, as they came up to where she was sitting ; "the Princess Sophie, I believe you already know."

Mr Lawleigh bowed low to the Jewish heiress, and expressed the pleasure he felt at making her acquaintance.

The young lady was certainly not possessed of any great personal attractions. Her eyes were fine, but the features generally, heavy and common-looking, though she had a good expression.

“Are you going to play lawn tennis?” asked Mr Lawleigh, glancing at her tightly tied-back dress and high-heeled shoes.

“I! most certainly not. I abhor the very name of it; it is lawn tennis from morning to night. You English are monomaniacs on the subject; but then, you are always in extremes, are you not?” she said, smiling, and in rather broken English. “I came here because Lady Clementina was so amiable as to offer me a cup of tea.”

“Allow me,” said Mr Lawleigh, “to fetch you a chair;” and having seen the young lady comfortably established, and enjoying a slice of rich cake, he turned away.

“When will you be ready, young ladies?” asked Allan Barrington. “Lady Denzil says she will begin as soon as you like. We have no time to lose; it is already five o'clock.”

“I must eat this cake first,” replied Marie gravely. “I love cakes, especially when they have chocolate on the top of them. If you wish to enjoy things, Captain Barrington, never be in a hurry. I make a rule of getting all the pleasure I can out of everything.”

“There is a deal of worldly wisdom in that little head of yours,” said Sir John, with a smile.

“Ah, you are a dear! you always say nice things,” replied the little Princess, getting up and making him a low curtsey. “Would you like to take care of my hat? the sun has gone down, and it falls over my eyes. You may put it on if you like. See!” she cried, as she snatched off the tall, grey felt hat he wore, and placed the dainty concoction of lace and flowers on his head, “how very nice you look; you are quite beautiful.”

“I will take your word for it,” replied Sir John, laughing, while Sophie Basileff cast a reproving glance at her madcap sister, who, whirling her hat off Sir John’s head and flinging it on the grass, replaced his own, and then, kissing her hand to him, she ran forward to join the players, swinging her racquet as she went.

“ What a merry, bright-hearted little thing she is ! ” said Sir John, smiling kindly, as he watched the dainty figure tripping along.

“ Marie is so young and so thoughtless that you must forgive her, Sir John ; besides, my father has always spoilt her so much.”

END OF VOL. I.









